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GERMAN ANTI-SUPERNATURALISM.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY LEVEY, ROBSON, AND FRANKLYN,
Great New Street, Fetter Lane.

GERMAN ANTI-SUPERNATURALISM.

Six Lectures

ON

STRAUSS'S "LIFE OF JESUS;"

DELIVERED AT

THE CHAPEL IN SOUTH PLACE, FINSBURY.

BY

PHILIP HARWOOD.

"Weil die Frucht jetzt vor uns liegt, gelöst, wie reife Früchte pflügen, von dem Zweige und Stamme, der sie trug, soll sie nicht auf einem Baume gewachsen, sondern unmittelbar vom Himmel gefallen sein. Kindische Vorstellung!"

STRAUSS, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre*.

LONDON:

CHARLES FOX, PATERNOSTER ROW;

JOHN GREEN, NEWGATE STREET;

AND JOHN MARDON, FARRINGDON STREET.

1841.

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PREFACE.

THE chief aim of the Author, in these Lectures, is to stimulate inquiry into a subject which he regards as of first-rate importance in historical and moral speculation. He wishes to draw the attention of all who concern themselves with the problem of the Origin of Christianity, to a solution of it which has cleared away many difficulties from his own mind, and which may possibly render a like service to others.

The Author is quite aware that, as an exposition of the "Leben Jesu," the following pages must be felt, by every reader of that masterly work, to be exceedingly defective and incomplete. To those who are unacquainted with Dr. Strauss's book, they can convey but a most inadequate idea of its real character and value. The immense learning, the acute reasoning, the scholarlike and logical thoroughness that pervade every part of it, are qualities that cannot be presented in the form of extract and abridgment. He trusts that the time may come when English literature will be enriched with a well-executed translation both of the *Leben Jesu* and the *Streitschriften*. Meanwhile he the less regrets the omission (unavoidable in a book of this size) of some important topics connected with his subject, and the cursory treatment of others, as the recent re-appearance, in an enlarged form, of

Mr. Hennell's "Inquiry concerning the Origin of Christianity," enables him to refer his readers to a work in which they will find a detailed investigation of the whole matter, conducted with singular patience, clearness and fairness.

PANCRAE VALE,
December 1841.

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GERMAN ANTI-SUPERNATURALISM.

LECTURE I.

I INTEND, in these Lectures, to give you some account of Dr. Strauss's "Life of Jesus;"* a book which I presume most of us have heard of, and heard of in connexions that must have stimulated curiosity to inquire what kind of book it is. It is deserving of attention on many grounds. As an attempted solution (the most noted in recent European literature) of one of the gravest of historical and moral problems; and as an expression of German thought, a development of tendencies that have been working in the German mind since the time of Semler, this work of Strauss's must be interesting alike to the theological inquirer and to the general student: while the reputation which it has acquired, the controversies which it has elicited, together with the critical talent, acuteness, learning and moral uprightness which it manifests in the estimation of the more distinguished even of the Author's opponents, concur in claiming for it a careful examination from all who concern themselves with the subject of which it treats, or with the tendencies and characteristics of German theology. Judging from the impression which the "Life of Jesus" has made upon my own mind, I believe that many of us will think their time and attention well employed in availing themselves of such assistance as it may render towards a clearer understanding of that great question—the Origin of Christianity.

* *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet von DR. DAVID FRIEDRICH STRAUSS. Dritte Auflage. Tübingen, 1838.*

I take for examination, in this Lecture, Dr. Strauss's Introductory Chapter, which he entitles "The Development of the Mythical Point of View for the Gospel History." Our Author's leading principle, I may here explain, is quite different from that of some others of the theologians of Germany, whose names are most familiar to us as anti-supernaturalists—such, for example, as Eichhorn and Paulus. He is as distinctly opposed to them as they are to the orthodox supernaturalists; agreeing with them in the rejection of miracle, but altogether differing from them in the method by which this common result is evolved. In fact, we may count three distinct schools of theological rationalism (using the word in its largest sense, as denoting disbelief of the supernatural), each having its representatives in German literature. First, is that which we may call *anti-Christian rationalism* (of course I use the term 'anti-Christian' simply as a matter-of-fact designation, without implying by it either praise or blame); the system of those inquirers who regard the miracles of Scripture as juggleries and frauds, and the workers of them as consciously deceiving mankind by forging divine credentials and simulating a divine mission. This is essentially the theory of the celebrated "Wolfenbüttel Fragments," given to the world by Lessing. It is characteristic of this scheme to account Christ a political agitator; the disciples emissaries of sedition; and such a transaction as the entry into Jerusalem, or the driving the traders out of the temple, an abortive attempt at insurrection. I call it 'anti-Christian,' because it assumes an antagonistic position towards the character and work of Christ.

Then there is, secondly, what we may designate *Christian rationalism, from the historical point of view*; the system which regards the narrative books of Scripture as real, honest histories of real events—those events, however, partially misinterpreted by ignorance; resolving the miracles into ill-understood or undesignedly exaggerated natural occurrences, which the rude science of the day interpreted as special acts of Deity attesting the divine mission of the agents. It is characteristic of this theory to regard Christ as a wise and good man, healing

disease by felicitous accident, by medical skill, or by the natural action of his faith on the faith of the patient; and, in every narrative of miracle, to cast about for some supposable germ of fact out of which the mistake or exaggeration might have innocently grown. The great representatives of this school are Eichhorn and Paulus. I call it 'Christian,' because it allows of sympathy with the spirit and character of Christ; its divergence from other modes of Christianity merely respects a question of physical, external fact. And I call it 'historical,' to distinguish it from a third form of anti-supernaturalism, which treats the Scripture narratives of miracle not as authentic histories, but as *mythi*, poetical and moral fables, having their origin in ideas rather than in facts; expressing a religious faith rather than an historical reminiscence. Not, of course, that a foundation of fact is denied for the histories of Christ; it is granted that Christ had a history, known to us in its general outlines: but it is maintained that we have not data for ascertaining the details of that history; that the original occurrences, whatever they were, come to us in a mythical and legendary dress, from which we cannot confidently separate them; and that it were a vain and hopeless labour to try to guess out the specific facts from which the existing legends have gradually grown, by a process of which we see only the results, but know nothing of its intermediate stages. Floating traditions of what Jesus had been and done, arrayed in a garb of poetic fable answering to the prophetic type of what the Christ ought to be and to do—such, on this system, are the materials of our gospels. It is characteristic of this scheme to doubt the genuineness, the contemporaneous authorship of the historical books of Scripture; and, instead of accounting for the facts recorded by tracing them to a source in other supposed or imagined facts, to account for the record itself by tracing it to a source in pre-existing ideas and traditions, and in general laws of thought and feeling. This is the *mythical theory of Christian anti-supernaturalism*; 'Christian' still, like the other, since it implies no antagonism to the moral ideas which *are* Christianity, but merely theorises upon the outer form in which those

ideas are exhibited. The stronghold of this scheme is obviously in such narratives as those of the nativities of John the Baptist and Jesus; where we have a whole world of legend, evidently constructed after the model of older legends—angels with Hebrew names coming to announce the birth of children; men and women speaking poetry extempore; dreams and visions without stint;—the whole done ‘that the prophets might be fulfilled;’ one such instance of a *made fact* being held to indicate tendencies and capabilities in the early Christian mind, which may be supposed to have worked in other instances. This view has been partially adopted by many German theologians: but its complete development and systematic application to the phenomena of the four gospels have been reserved for Dr. Strauss in his “Life of Jesus.”

The first section of our Author’s Introduction is entitled “*The inevitable rise of different ways of explaining sacred histories.*” He here indicates the source of that tendency to heretical and sceptical dealing with written revelations, which invariably manifests itself as mind advances, in one generation, beyond the ideas and knowledge of a preceding one. “Whenever,” he says, “a religion resting upon written records succeeds in diffusing itself through distant lands and times, accompanying its votaries through many progressive stages of mental growth, then, sooner or later, arises a discrepancy between the teachings of such records and the newer culture of those who have been trained to regard them as sacred books.” This alienation of men’s minds from a documentary religion, will, he proceeds to shew, apply mainly to two points; first, to that ceaseless interposition of Deity, that direct and visible interference of the divine with the human, which (implied in all antique religions) distinctly contradicts the laws of mental and physical being, as these are developed with every new advance of intelligence; and, secondly, to the moral barbarisms which will be found in religions born in times of barbarism. And it will express itself in one or the other of two ways, according to the relative proportions of reverence and of logical acumen in the individual mind. Men will either say, while holding to the religion, ‘Surely,

a divine book never can really mean this thing which the letter of it seems to say'—and then will come a process of interpretation, to mediate and reconcile, and shew that the book may or must mean something very different from the offensive literality; or else they will reject the religion altogether, and say, 'The book which contains such a thing as this is not divine, is an error, or a fraud.'

In one of these two ways, according to our Author, will advancing intelligence and moral refinement re-adjust their relations to a stationary book-religion,—either assuming the divinity of the book as a fixed point, and inferring error in the obnoxious interpretation; or else assuming the justness of the interpretation, and inferring the non-divinity of the book. We have instances of both in our modern theology. The former is the course taken by those very orthodox geologists who interpolate their thousands of years—as many as may be wanted—between the second and third verses of the first chapter of Genesis, to make out Moses sound in the faith of the geological section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science: the latter is the course of those inquirers who venture to question the plenary inspiration of certain Old-Testament books, which exhibit the Deity in attributes not readily distinguishable from those of Homer's Mars. One or the other of these two things will take place in the mutual relations of progressive mind and stationary creed, as surely as mind is mind, and creed is creed.

The history of the Greek mind (as Dr. Strauss goes on to shew in another section) illustrates this conflict between the spirit and the letter. Intelligence and morality were early revolted by the wild conflicts of Hesiod's Theogony, and the loves, hates, and other goings-on of the Homeric Olympus: and so Anaxagoras and others allegorised the mythology of the Iliad into something about virtue and justice, making Homer a teacher of wisdom in fable (which he is, though not quite in that sense); and the Stoics interpreted the wars of the gods symbolically of the elemental strife of nature working herself from a chaos into a world. This was one way of dealing with fables which men had got past believing in;

extracting truth out of them, or putting truth into them, by figurative interpretation, giving them a scientific and moral, in place of their lost historical and physical truth. Another class of thinkers (of whom Euhemerus is the representative) took precisely the reverse course: recognised an element of historical truth in the legends of the heroic age, while refusing to allow them any other sort of truth; translating their gods into men—heroes and sages, kings and tyrants—who had won the world's gratitude by wise and useful inventions, or extorted its homage by fraud and force.

The progress of the Hebrew mind was somewhat different, the Hebrew religion being altogether of a less pliant and manageable sort. There the divinity of the book was the fixed point, the centre of mental action; and advancing speculation must adjust itself to that, as it best could, by mediatory process of interpretation. Hence there arose—first in Palestine, in the time after the Maccabees, and afterwards in Alexandria, among the Egyptian Jews, whose minds had the stimulus of Grecian culture and civilisation—schools of biblical interpreters, who made it a rule never to find any thing in their scriptures but what they thought for the honour and glory of God; who dexterously allegorised out of those scriptures all barbarisms and absurdities, and allegorised into them the ideas of their latest and most improved philosophy. Of this class of Jewish expositors the completest specimen is Philo, who developed and extensively applied the notion of a double sense in Scripture—a literal and a spiritual—usually retaining both; but, in some instances of marked necessity, rejecting the literality altogether, and taking the record simply as allegory. This was carried further by the Christians of Alexandria, who were yet more remote from the old Hebrew point of view. Of these Origen, in particular, signalised himself by the discovery of a threefold sense in Scripture—a literal, a moral, and a mystical—answering to his threefold division of man into body, soul, and spirit. Origen went further than Philo; scrupling not to allegorise whatever he did not like, either in the Old Testament or the New, making the most of the text that ‘the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth

life,' freely attributing historical falsehood in order to retain moral truth, and saving divine inspiration, in its most critical emergencies, by evaporating history into poetry.

Our Author proceeds, through several sections, and much more in detail than we can now follow him, with his review of these attempts of advancing knowledge to re-adjust its relations to a fixed faith. Passing over that long period of the dark ages, during which the spirit and the letter were stationary together, he takes up the history again with the Deists and Naturalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; who, speaking generally, assumed a position of antagonism to the Jewish and Christian revelations, both in their historical and their moral aspects. Here we need not accompany him. He then goes on to explain that historico-rationalist theory which I have already mentioned in connexion with the names of Eichhorn and Paulus, and to give his reasons for dissenting from it. While the numerous Christian apologists, he informs us, in Germany and elsewhere, were maintaining, against the English deists and the Wolfenbüttel Fragmentist, the reality of the Scripture revelation and the supernaturalism of the Hebrew and Christian records, another class of theologians in Germany struck into an entirely new path. As, in the historical rationalising of the old Greek mythology, there had been two courses open to the inquirer, who might regard the deities of that mythology either as wise and good men, sages and lawgivers, that had earned their apotheosis by the title of a world's admiring gratitude; or, on the other hand, as tyrants and deceivers, who had veiled themselves in a nimbus of divinity to make popular reverence a stepping-stone to political power,—so it was with the marvellous and incredible in Hebrew and Christian scripture. The rationalist might take it in more ways than one. There was an alternative open to him beside that of the deists. You might strip the prophet of his divinity, and leave him his humanity unwounded. You might cease to marvel at his miracles, without denouncing them as juggleries. They might have been natural occurrences misunderstood and misreported; and the denial of the supposed supernaturalism of them implied no antagonism

to the faith, the moral ideas, with whose first preaching and preachers such mistakes had naturally and innocently connected themselves.

This alternative was, in fact, embraced by some of the best theologians of Germany. Eichhorn wrote a critique to this effect on the Wolfenbüttel Fragments; agreeing with the Fragmentist in rejecting miracle, but distinctly repelling the charge of fraud and imposture—a charge, he says, which can only be made through neglecting to take the old Scripture records in the spirit of the time from which they come. They belong to a childlike, unscientific age and people, and must be treated accordingly. While men were ignorant of nature and her laws, they made every thing supernatural, immediate, divine. Lofty thoughts, eloquent words, useful inventions, vivid dreams were inspirations—special utterances and workings of the mind of God. So that there was no fraud in this matter of the miracles, as the Fragmentist had too severely charged, but only the colouring which fact ever receives from the opinions of the witness and the narrator; and the thing to be done was to separate, by the special probabilities of each individual case, the kernel of fact from the shell of opinion, taking the one and casting away the other. This was Eichhorn's point of view,—historical rationalism. He explained on these principles a large part of the Old Testament history, and some things in the New (though here he seems to have been less confident of the universal applicableness of the theory). He was followed by Professor Paulus; who, in the year 1800, published a Commentary on the Gospels, in which he goes through those books in detail, assuming the contemporaneousness of the histories and the honesty and competence of the historians, and, with infinite ingenuity, working the problem of accounting for the miracles, by tracing them, one by one, to a probable or possible foundation in fact.

Theological inquiry could not, however, pause here. This historical rationalism was a complicated, dubious thing, at the best; and the foundation upon which it rested—the contemporaneous authorship and strictly historical character of the Scripture narratives of miracle—could not long remain un-

questioned. And when Bauer and De Wette came forward with their reasons for dating the Pentateuch some centuries after Moses, and when the genuineness and antiquity of the Gospels themselves appeared open to grave doubts, the whole matter assumed another form; and it began to be suggested that there might be a Hebrew and Christian as well as a Greek mythology, the one, like the other, having its root in ideas rather than in facts—a suggestion which was considerably facilitated by the general results of inquiry into the early religions of nations. Eichhorn himself eventually relinquished his historical explanation of the Fall of Man (which he had very ingeniously resolved into a tradition of some grievous bodily harm that the inexperience of a young world had drawn upon itself by eating a poisonous fruit), and learned to see in it the mythical clothing of a moral truth—the truth that in seeking and striving after the Impossible we cheat ourselves of the Actual, and that this is the origin of evil, the great Original Sin by which Adam and all his sons fall. From this time there was a general tendency in German speculation to take the mythical rather than the historical point of view, as indicating the true solution of the phenomena of Biblical supernaturalism. Thus, for instance, in the case of the promise of God to Abraham, Eichhorn had sought an explanation in fact: the patriarch was gazing up into heaven one fine summer's night, and read, in the star-bespangled sky, an augury of the growth of his family into a multitude as the stars of that sky innumerable. De Wette demurs to this; doubts the naturalness and likelihood of Abraham ever having had any such thought in his head; and holds it very much more probable that the whole together is poetry, the graceful and patriotic fiction of a later day, inspired by the Hebrew instinct of nationality and pride of ancestry. This is a good illustration of the difference between the two schools of anti-supernaturalism—the historical and the mythical. Eichhorn rates high the antiquity of the record in Genesis, and finds a basis for it in fact; De Wette dates the record some centuries lower, and makes it the poetical garb of an idea. The one accounts in detail for the thing recorded; the other ac-

counts in general for the growth of the record itself. The one speculates upon the minutiae of the history; the other asks, Are we sure that it is history at all?

After thus indicating the prevalent direction of theological inquiry to the mythical rather than the historical, Dr. Strauss proceeds to examine the applicableness of the mythical view to the supernaturalism of the New Testament, and the probabilities, external and internal, of the presence of this sort of poetic fable in the records we have of the life of Christ. The first question to be considered in such an inquiry obviously is, What are our four gospels? by whom written, and when? Are they histories? Are they histories written by men morally and intellectually capable of performing the historic function, capable of testing facts rigidly and detailing them precisely? Are they the work of eye and ear-witnesses? Are they of authorship contemporary with the events they professedly record? How far can we authentically and confidently trace these four books up the ascent of time past, towards that critical epoch which we all want to reach—somewhere about the year 30 of our era?

These questions Strauss discusses at some length. I shall now only state his results, and one or two of the leading data on which those results are grounded. The conclusion of the whole inquiry is *uncertainty*. We know not who wrote these gospels, when, or where. The names affixed to them prove nothing. It was a not uncommon thing with the Jews to attach great names to works which they highly valued: there are psalms bearing David's name, which evidently belong to the time of the Babylonish captivity, or later; and the book of Daniel contains things which cannot have been written before the age of Antiochus Epiphanes. Then, what quotations do we find of these gospels in early Christian writers? None that are quite clear of doubt and difficulty till we get past the middle of the second century; none, that is, that we can distinctly and confidently identify as taken from our four gospels. Several early writers, indeed, quote sayings of Christ's, which agree in the main with things in our gospels, but they do not avowedly quote them from our gospels: oral

tradition, or unapostolic memoirs, may have supplied the materials of such quotations. The first quotation of a passage from the fourth gospel as written by John, occurs in a work of one Theophilus of Antioch, about the year 170. So that, altogether, our Author concludes, the thing is uncertain. The genuineness of our gospels, the apostolicity of their authorship, cannot be relied upon as a proved point. We are unable to follow them, with clear assurance, higher up into antiquity than somewhere after the middle of the second century: while the less definite notices we possess of works partially answering to the description of these books do not commence until about the beginning of the second third-part of that century. "Ample room," he adds, "for attributing to apostles works which they never wrote!" They must all have died, some here, some there, during the second half of the first century, while the unwritten gospel was spreading far and wide through the empire; so that we have many and many a quoted saying of Christ's, in the early ecclesiastical literature, agreeing with passages in our gospels, which yet may have been taken not from our gospels, but from collateral and independent sources (oral or written), and which consequently can prove nothing about our gospels. This seems to be all we actually know respecting the external credentials of those memoirs of the life of Christ which, selected from amidst a mass of other biographical notices, have become incorporated with what we call the *canon*, under the venerated names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John may have written these books, for anything we know to the contrary; and they also may, for anything we know to the contrary, have severally left this world without the remotest conception that all coming time would consecrate their names under the common designation — Evangelists.

Then, if we look at the internal, moral probability of a mythical element having blended itself with the traditionary recollections of the life of Jesus, the first thing to be taken into account is the structure and tendency of the Hebrew mind. The Hebrews, like other Orientals, were easy of faith in the miraculous. They were never a scientific, but a be-

lieving, imaginative race. The idea of interposition by the unseen Cause of causes in the secondary trains of causation had nothing in it startling to a Hebrew man. Their records teem with miracle and marvel. They speak even of the commonest events in the dialect of supernaturalism. It was impossible, by the laws of Hebrew thought and feeling, that miracles should not grow up around the life and person of their Messiah, unless the whole ground had been so clearly and fully preoccupied with well-authenticated and defined naturalism, as to leave no standing-room for the supernatural. Given some thirty, forty, or fifty years (to ask no more) before the floating, traditionary recollections of the Christ came to be fixed in writing, and it would have needed a miracle to keep down the growth of miracles: in other words, given a blank in the Messiah's history, and they would assuredly fill in that blank with the marvellous. Nothing could have hindered this, but that the eye-witnesses of Christ's life should have been, in the first place, singularly clear-headed and somewhat sceptical men; and, in the next, that they should have been gifted with something approaching to omnipresence, to put down every movement of ecclesiastical imagination in the direction of supernaturalism. Miracles in the life and work of the Messiah!—it was a thing of course. It was all settled long before any Messiah was born to them. Any Hebrew man could have sketched a life of the Christ, so far as making it miraculous went. It was all in type before ever Jesus of Nazareth came into the world. They knew that he would be a prophet, a child of promise: that meant that he would be born out of the course of nature, pre-announced by messengers from the sky, or otherwise miraculously honoured before birth, like other prophets and other children of promise—Isaac, and Samson, and Samuel. He was to be Son of David: that meant that he would come out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was. He was to be a prophet like unto Moses: that meant that his infancy would be one of peril and deliverance; a second Pharaoh would seek his young life, with devices as atrocious and as futile as those of the first Pharaoh for cutting off Israel's first Saviour. Like Moses,

he would feed his people miraculously in a desert, and walk dryshod through the sea, or on the sea. Like Elisha, he would cleanse the lepers and raise the dead: like Elisha's master, he would ascend visibly to heaven. All these things, and many more like them, were settled points before ever the Christ came. There was no preventing it. Israel was a people of miracle, mythus, and legend; and all these tendencies of the national heart, and traditions of the national literature, would flow with resistless force into the blank spaces of their Messiah's history.

On grounds such as I have now stated, Dr. Strauss holds himself entitled to study the four gospels with the expectation of finding them largely tinctured with the mythical or poetico-fabulous element. He approaches them as works of unknown date and authorship, possessing no other claims to the character of histories than what they carry within themselves; as containing mingled poetry and history (though in proportions which we have not now the means of definitely analysing), produced by the joint action of traditionary reminiscences of what Jesus had been, and ideas, taken from Hebrew prophecy and the analogies of Hebrew legend, of what the Christ ought to be, and must have been. This is our Author's "Development of the mythical point of view for the gospel history." The way in which he applies it to the details of that history, it will be the object of the remaining Lectures of this course to make intelligible to you.

I have no wish to anticipate just now conclusions which we have no right to arrive at without inquiry: yet it may not be out of place to observe even here, that this is a view of the gospel histories by no means antecedently improbable. It seems to me that there is much about it both of historical likelihood and of moral fitness. Historically, it seems not improbable that such should be the tone and structure of our gospels. They are not, in any sense, the beginning, the cause of Christianity, but an effect of it. Christianity, in its beginning, was traditionary; communicated orally from the living heart to the living heart, in words that were spirit and life.

It was not at all a thing of books. It did not grow up among a writing and reading people, but among a speaking and hearing people. Men would not begin with writing about Christ: they would leave that till they found themselves beginning to forget him, and would then take pen and parchment as helps to feeble and fading memories. It was not the gospels that made Christianity, but Christianity that made the gospels; and they would scarcely be among the earliest of its creations. It seems altogether a likely thing—in analogy and agreement with the idea, the type of a religion like Christianity—that its gospels should be of this mixed, indefinite, second-hand sort; half poetry and half tradition; mere offshoots and collateral results and expressions of the Gospel; a kind of prose epic of the *Paradise Regained*; *Traditions of Palestine*; a growth from the root, not of facts scrupulously collected, rigidly tested and carefully arranged, and discourses taken down in shorthand as from the lips of a theological lecturer—but of ideas, impulses, memories and hopes, to which past, present and future, things visible and things invisible, furnished their several contributions, in proportions which neither they who wrote nor we who read can scientifically analyse.

And if there is historical likelihood in this notion of mythical gospels, still more, it strikes me, is there moral fitness; the fitness of a fine, delicate accordance with the moral power and spirit of Christianity, with the power and spirit of him who was and is Christianity, whose life lives all through these loose, uncertain legends, a divine thread of moral unity binding all into one—him who ever loved to speak in parables, whose whole being and doing was mythical, symbolic, a picture-teaching. The Christ spoke in parable then, and he speaks in parable now; and now, as then, true loving hearts may see a divine meaning in it all—the spirit of truth veiled in a literality of fiction. The Gospel is all true—true to our heart of hearts, whatever becomes of its framework of local and literal imagery; as the *Prodigal Son* and the *Good Samaritan* are true, though we find no place for the literalities of those divine fictions anywhere in our tables of chronology. It is all truth—heaven-sent, God-inspired truth—whoever they

may have been that took pen in hand, and wrote it down for us. Here it is: we have no need to vex ourselves over-much with anxious questionings about how it came to be: it is, it has been, it will be, truth most profound, beauty most meekly graceful, goodness most winning, love most lovely, the resurrection and the life of poor, sick, fallen, down-trodden humanity.

LECTURE II.

OUR examination, in the last Lecture, of Dr. Strauss's Introductory Chapter, has put us in possession of his general principle in regard to the character and structure of the gospel narratives; and we are now in a condition to proceed with his specific applications of that principle to the details of them. I may remind you that we found, in the theological literature of Germany, three distinct schools of anti-supernaturalism—each as clearly marked off from the other two as they all are together from supernaturalist orthodoxy. First, there are those anti-supernaturalists who regard the miracles as frauds, and the workers of them as conscious deceivers: this school is represented in German literature by the Wolfenbüttel Fragments. Secondly, there are those who take the Scripture narratives as real, honest histories of real events—those events, however, coloured by the opinions of the witnesses and the narrators, and exhibited, after the Hebrew mode, in a costume of supernaturalist idea and phraseology; and who hold it accordingly the great business of the interpreter to re-translate the supernatural into the natural, to separate fact from opinion, and strip bare the actuality which Orientalism has veiled in marvel: of this school the two greatest names are Eichhorn and Paulus. And thirdly, there are those who take the miracles and much else in Scripture, not as history at all, but as poetry, fable, mythus, having but an indirect and usually unascertainable relation to fact of any kind; as having a root in ideas rather than in facts; as symbols of a religious faith rather than transcripts of an historical reminiscence: of this school is Dr. Strauss.

The difference between these two last-named descriptions of anti-supernaturalist theology—the historical and the mythical—is obviously a radical one. It is characteristic of the

historical school to rate high the antiquity of the books of Scripture, and explain their supernaturalism in detail, by tracing each separate miracle to a root in natural fact. It is characteristic of the mythical school to rate low the antiquity of the books of Scripture, to doubt their pretensions to the character of authentic histories, and explain their supernaturalism in the general by reference to the ideas of which it is symbolically expressive. According to the former, for instance, the Gift of Tongues at the Pentecost was a matter of fact, noted by a contemporary historian: there *was* the sound from heaven, the rushing mighty wind, with a something that might be taken for tongues of fire; and there was the strange impulsive eloquence, the gift of a new speech, at which the dwellers in Jerusalem marvelled; all these things really were, then and there—only they were not miracles, but natural phenomena, in which the rude science and strong faith of the time and the men saw a divine agency and felt a divine inspiration:—this is the historico-rationalist account of the matter. According to the mythical view, nothing of all this ever happened, either on the day of Pentecost or on any other day; the whole is fiction together, the sort of fiction called *mythus*, a poetical expression of the ideas of a somewhat later time respecting apostolic inspiration and its sources. The rushing mighty wind symbolised the breathing of the spirit of God, and the tongues of fire the burning eloquence that melted stony hearts—an eloquence wide and manifold in its working as it was resistlessly piercing, intelligible to that common heart of humanity which is the same in all of us, Parthian, Mede and Elamite, Jew and Gentile—breaking down every partition-wall of nationality, and making all one in the power of a common sympathy and a common faith;—the whole localised at Jerusalem, because from Jerusalem the word of the Lord went forth; and timed at the Pentecost, because of the poetical fitness there was in beginning the harvest of the world at the feast of first-fruits, in dating the promulgation of the new law on the festive anniversary of the giving of the old law: this is the mythical view of the matter. It was the baptism of the holy spirit and of fire rendered into

poetry, enshrined in legend, that the church universal through all time might see how 'that was fulfilled which had been spoken by the prophet Joel.' This mythical anti-supernaturalism is adopted by Dr. Strauss in its fullest extent, and his "Life of Jesus" is an elaborate application of it to the details of the four gospels.

There is a passage towards the close of our Author's Introduction, defining the nature and sources of the Evangelic Mythus, which I will give you in his own words:—

"By an Evangelic Mythus, I understand a narration, relating directly or indirectly to Jesus, which we may more or less regard as expressing not an historical fact, but an idea of his earliest followers. The Mythus, thus defined, will meet us, here as elsewhere, sometimes in its *pure* form, as the substance of a narration, sometimes *mixed*, as an accretion to an actual history.

"The pure Evangelic Mythus will have two sources; which, however, generally speaking, will be found to run into one another, and to co-operate, though in varying proportions, in forming the mythical product. The one of these sources is the Messianic idea or expectation, already existing in the Jewish mind before Jesus and independently of him: the other is the peculiar impression which the character and fate, the personality of Jesus left behind him to modify that Messianic idea. For instance, the account of the Transfiguration has flowed almost entirely from the former of these sources; with this single modification taken from the latter, that they who appeared with Jesus on the Mount 'spake of his decease.' On the other hand, the rending of the vail of the temple at the death of Jesus seems altogether to have sprung from the relation which he, and his church after him, sustained to the Jewish temple-worship. Since, in this case, something historical, though merely a general feature of character or position, is the source of the mythus, we are thus conducted to the

"Historical (or mixed) mythus; which is that of which a definite individual fact supplies the ground-work—such fact, however, acted upon by the Christian inspiration, and consequently cased in mythical accretions. Such a fact is, sometimes, a discourse of Jesus; such, for example, as that about the 'fishers of men,' and the parable of the barren fig-tree, which now lie before us transmuted into miraculous acts. Sometimes it is an actual transaction or event from his

life; for instance, the mythical traits in the account of the Baptism are connected with an actuality: some of the miracles, too, may have had their ground-work in natural occurrences, which the narrative has either exhibited in a supernatural light, or enriched with features of supernaturalism."

Such is our Author's definition of the Evangelic Mythus, its nature and sources. The practical rule which he adopts in ascertaining the mythical element of a gospel narrative, and the kind of test which he uses in this analysis, are stated in the following canon of criticism:—

"Where not only the particular external mode of an occurrence is critically suspicious (as when it runs over incidentally into the marvellous), but the ultimate inner nature, the kernel and ground-work of it, is either inconceivable in itself, or in striking affinity to the Messianic idea of the Jews of that age—then not only the particular alleged form of the transaction, but the whole substance of it together, must be held unhistorical. Where, on the other hand, only the form of a narration bears unhistorical characteristics, but not the narration itself in its essential contents, there it is at least possible to suppose a nucleus of historical fact; although whether such fact actually was, and what it was, we never can confidently say, unless it be discoverable from other sources. It is less difficult, in dealing with traditionary or embellished narrations, by abstracting those features of them which palpably bear the mark of false picturesqueness, exaggeration, and the like—by eliminating extraneous ingredients, and filling in hiatuses—to arrive (proximately at least) at the historical ground-work.

"The boundary-line, however, between the historical and the unhistorical, in narratives which, like our gospels, have a tincture of this latter in their composition, must ever remain fluctuating and unsusceptible of precise ascertainment. Least of all can it be expected that the first comprehensive attempt to treat these narratives from the critical point of view should be successful in drawing that line sharply and clearly. In the obscurity which criticism has produced by the extinction of all lights hitherto held historical, the eye must train itself gradually, by practice, to discriminate objects with precision; and the Author of this work would expressly guard himself against being supposed, in any case, to assert that nothing happened, merely because he declares that he does not know what happened."

With these views of what it is that he is likely to find in the gospel histories, and these laws of inquiry to govern him in the search, Dr. Strauss proceeds to examine in detail the phenomena which those histories exhibit. The first great division of his work is entitled "The History of the Birth and Childhood of Jesus:" and I take this for the subject of the present Lecture. All this portion of the gospel narratives is so rich in illustrative instances of the mythical, that we shall find it worthy of a degree of attention to which its intrinsic importance might scarcely entitle it. To understand well this 'Gospel of the Nativity,' will give us a firm hold of principles which we shall find exceedingly useful in our after-inquiries.

It may be proper to observe at the outset, that there does not seem to be any adequate critical ground for rejecting the initial chapters of Matthew and Luke (so calling them for brevity's sake) as spurious—cutting them out of the canon, or printing them in italics. The first and second chapters of these two gospels are just as canonical, for anything we really know to the contrary, as all the rest of them. The supposed evidence against them is of the slightest and flimsiest texture; amounting to no more than second-hand ecclesiastical hearsay, that certain individuals or sects, of whose means of judging and grounds of judging we are uninformed, did not receive these chapters into their copies—that is all: all the manuscripts have them, all the ancient versions have them, exactly as we have them. So that if we find, in these initial chapters, palpably irrational and false things, the inference is not that Evangelists did not write these chapters, but rather that Evangelists did write irrational and false things; that the prefixed names of Matthew and Luke are no warranty for rationality and truth. Here then, on the very threshold of the early Christian literature, we may look for indications of the influences that formed that literature, and the elements that entered into its composition; we may see what sort of a world we are coming into—whether an historical or a poetical world.

A very general allusion to the contents of these initial chapters of Matthew and Luke—(I may here say, once for all,

that by 'Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,' I simply mean the first, second, third, and fourth gospels, leaving the question of authorship untouched)—and to their points of mutual agreement and difference, will sufficiently enable us to accompany our Author through his examination of them. Both evangelists agree in representing the birth of Jesus as miraculous—miraculous in itself, and preceded and followed by miracle; angel visitants heralding the holy child, and even giving him his name beforehand; preternatural sights and sounds in the heavens above and the earth beneath, wandering stars, angel-carollings welcoming the divine infant—they both agree in this: they likewise agree in localising the birth at Bethlehem of Judea, and tracing the child's descent from David. In other things they differ. The star in the east, the magi, the massacre of the innocents, and the flight into Egypt, are peculiar to Matthew; and it would be difficult in the extreme to work them in any where with Luke's narrative: the shepherds, the angel-song, the presentation in the temple, together with the whole story of John the Baptist's miraculous nativity, are found in Luke alone. In some things the accounts are contradictory; Matthew evidently taking Bethlehem for the original abode of Joseph and Mary, Luke as evidently making Nazareth their home; while, in the matter of the genealogies, the two legends exhibit a kind and degree of divergency which has always been a scandal and sore perplexity to the most resolute orthodox believer.

Such are the general features of those narratives which meet us at the outset of two of the gospel histories, and the real character of which it is worth while trying to understand clearly, from the indications which they may be presumed to afford of the mental habits of the writers, and their principles of literary composition. The actual, historical truth of this gospel of the nativity, this Christmas-day religion, is a thing which one need hardly speak of at all. It would imply consequences at which the hardiest faith might well be more than half confounded. It would imply the truth of that science of angelography which the Jews had acquired in their captivity; angels with Chaldee names, courtiers of the celestial empire—

a regular hierarchy of them, with one Gabriel at their head, a sort of prime minister of heaven. It would imply that these Chaldee notions were true; true down to their minutest details; so true that actually men had got at the real name of the angel-in-waiting on God, the Lord High Chamberlain of the skies:—the angel's address to Zacharias, 'I am Gabriel, who stand in the presence of God,' would, if an historical reality, be Deity's *a posteriori* warranty for the spiritual rubbish of the Babylonian theosophy. The truth of these legends would imply some other things, too, of an equally formidable description. It would imply the truth of astrology; would be Deity's sanction of the superstition that reads the moral history of earth in the physical history of the heavens: it would imply a like divine sanction of the like superstition that reads a presage of future reality in those capricious combinations of the past which make our dreams: and it would imply the truth of interpretations of Scripture which we may see with our own eyes to be false and absurd interpretations:—for, in Matthew's account, we have an astrological calculation verified in result, with as many as five dreams all coming true, and five preposterous interpretations of prophecy all carefully fulfilled.

The truth of such a narrative is of course out of the question. The question is, What is the kind and source of its falseness? Is it the falseness of error, or of fiction? Is all this mass of supernaturalism delusion, or is it poetry? In other words, shall we rationalise it historically, or mythically? The German theologians have tried both ways; and certainly some of the expositions of the historico-rationalist school are not without interest from their singularity. According to one writer, the angel Gabriel that appeared to Zacharias in the temple was some man whom Zacharias took for an angel, and with whom he really held some such colloquy as that described by the evangelist. Another makes the angel a flash of lightning; and the conversation was only Zacharias's way of interpreting the thunder. Another takes refuge in the land of dreams. According to a fourth, the smoke curling up from the altar of incense, shone upon by the lamp-light, formed

itself into some kind of figure that might be imagined to bear some sort of resemblance to an angel; and Zacharias, in his excited state of mind, thought it was an angel—the angel Gabriel—and thought that he and Gabriel had the conversation as reported; and the temporary dumbness was paralysis, brought on by the excitement of the angel's promise, and cured by the subsequent excitement of its fulfilment. According to another learned divine, dealing with a different part of the story, the 'angel of the Lord, with a glory of the Lord shining around him,' that came to announce the young Christ's birth to the shepherds watching their flock by night, was no other than a man with a lantern coming out with the happy news, whom the shepherds, in their excited state, took for an angel; and the 'multitude of the heavenly host that appeared suddenly, praising God,' were simply this man's companions, uttering joyous shouts which the much-excited shepherds took for the chant of an angelic choir. And so they go on and on, all through the supernaturalism of the story, with a patience and sagacity which themselves border on the supernatural—hypothesis upon hypothesis, the unknown explained by the unknown—till one really feels as if it would be a sort of relief to believe the miracles at once, and have done with it. As Strauss says, the chief difference between this sort of rationalism and supernaturalist orthodoxy would seem to be that, whereas this believes all things are possible with God, the other holds that all things are possible with chance.

Our Author's way of dealing with the story is altogether different from this. Instead of setting himself to account in detail for the facts alleged in the history, by guessing out for them a source in other (supposed or imagined) facts, he moves the previous question, Is it a history at all? is it even a fiction founded on facts?—and, having negatived that, he proceeds to examine, not what facts are at the root of the recorded facts, but what ideas are at the root of the record itself. In his view, the whole together is not a history at all; it is a poem or poetic fable, a mythus, all the elements of which were in the Hebrew mind and literature before ever John and Jesus were born: and the very complete way in which he

makes this out, and the light which the whole inquiry sheds on the philosophy of evangelic supernaturalism, will make it worth our while to follow him, notwithstanding the seeming pettiness and triviality of this sort of disquisition.

According to Dr. Strauss, then, the whole of this gospel of the nativity is mythus ; an exhibition of ideas in a framework of incident created for the purpose. He makes very clear work of it ; altering nothing, cutting away nothing, objecting to nothing in detail, leaving all entire, just as it is—the angels, the star, the stable of Bethlehem, the manger-cradle, the wise men, the shepherds, the conversations in verse, the pedigrees from David, the massacre of the innocents, the flight into Egypt—leaving it all entire, only transferring it, in its entirety, from the world of history into the world of poetry. These things are not facts ; they do not come out of facts, or in any way represent facts ; they express, simply and solely, the ideas of the writers and their time.

This is a large conclusion, but I think our Author makes it out. It is very striking how this theory fits the narratives in question, down almost to their minutest details. Every thing in and about them, from first to last, realises some Hebrew idea, fulfils some Hebrew prophecy, is in parallelism with some Hebrew legend. Begin at the beginning and go on to the end—and you find throughout, together with abundant physical absurdity and historical untruth, a most exact poetical fitness. For instance, John the Baptist is the child of old age, the first-born of parents stricken in years ; his birth is pre-announced by an angel, like that of Jesus after him ; his very name is given him by the angel beforehand, like that of Jesus after him—a symbolical name, in the one case as in the other, indicative of some speciality of character or destiny. Well, there was nothing new in all this, nothing marvellous. The marvel would have been, if any part of it had been left out, if John and Jesus had come into the world like other children. There were precedents, types for the whole of it. As Zacharias and Elizabeth were stricken in years, and childless, so were Abraham and Sarah before them : the angel's promise to the priest at his altar was in parallelism

with the angel's promise to the patriarch in his tent: there was the promise in both cases, and there was the scepticism in both cases; Abraham doubted, and Zacharias doubted, and both expressed their doubts in very much the same way. Then, as John and Jesus were named before birth, so were Ishmael and Isaac. Samson's birth, too, had been foretold by an angel, with the addition that the child was to be a Nazarite unto God: so was John to be a Nazarite to God, to drink neither wine nor strong drink. And the infancy of the one was as the infancy of the other; the very form of words is copied: if we read of the one, that 'the child grew, and the spirit of the Lord moved him,' we are told of the other, that 'the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit.' There was nothing new in it; it existed already in idea and legend (as the Virgin Mother's *Magnificat* had been said or sung a thousand years before by the mother of Samuel). It was the regular Hebrew type of a great man, that he should be a child of promise, and come into the world unlike other men: 'theocratic decorum,' as Strauss calls it, required that as much should be done for the Messiah and his pioneer as for Ishmael and Isaac, Samson and Samuel.

In Matthew we find similar traces, only perhaps broader ones, of the presence of the mythical element. The Messiah was to be the Son of God: Matthew makes him the Son of God; what could he do less? The theological doctrine made the physical fact. The *star in the east* has given commentators a good deal of trouble; rationalist divines have been as much perplexed by this phenomenon as was Herod himself. Now it is a meteor; and now a comet; and now again a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn in the sign Pisces; which conjunction, it is appositely suggested, can be shewn by the tables to have actually taken place three years before Herod's death. There need be no difficulty in saying what it was, if we will only read our Bibles: it is a very old story; it dates from the time of Balaam. The true solution of it, Strauss tells us, is suggested, with much *naïveté*, by some of the fathers of the Church; who, in explaining how it was that heathen magi should know the star of the Hebrew Messiah,

start this conjecture—that they might have inherited the knowledge from the heathen *magus* Balaam, who had foretold that ‘there should come a star out of Jacob, and a sceptre out of Israel.’ Our Author observes that Schmidt has very justly objected to Paulus’s exposition of this story, that it takes no account of the star which, according to Jewish expectation, was to appear at the coming of the Messiah; “and yet,” says Schmidt, “there is salvation for this legend in no other—there is no other name than that of Balaam through which it may be saved.” Even apart from Balaam, however, it is a natural astrological conception. It is paralleled in other legends, heathen and Jewish. A comet appeared at the birth, and again at the accession, of Mithridates; Julius Cæsar’s death was signalised by celestial wonders of an equally significant description; and (which is more to the point) rabbinical tradition speaks of a star that heralded the birth of Abraham. So that altogether it was most natural that a star in the east should shine upon the cradle of the young Messiah. And who more likely to see this star, and read its pointings rightly, than magi, wise men of the east, astrologers and diviners by profession, heirs and successors of the very Balaam whose prophetic eye had ‘beheld it, but not nigh?’ David and Isaiah, too, had seen afar off Tarshish and Sheba, Midian and Ephah, bringing presents and offering gifts to the rising glory of the Lord in Israel—the King who should have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth: Gentiles should come to that light, and kings to the brightness of its rising, with their gold, and silver, and incense. We have here the calling of the Gentiles rendered into mythic symbol: that worship of magi at the cradle of the babe of Bethlehem pictures the heart’s homage of many nations to the Prince of Peace.

Then, again, Herod’s savage scheme against the young child’s life, with the escape into Egypt—how true it is to the spirit of the old mythology in general, and the Hebrew mythology in particular! Antiquity ever loved to make its great men greater still, by fabling imminent risks and hair-breadth miraculous deliverances for their infancy: the more

fearful the peril, the more striking the miracle of the escape, and the more captivating the romance and poetry of the contrast with their after-fortunes. I need not speak of Cyrus, and Romulus, and Jupiter, with such a case in point as that of Moses—still more distinctly and directly in point when we take it with the additions and improvements of Josephus; which additions and improvements themselves only shew how fond the Hebrews were of this way of making their heroes more heroic still. This historian ascribes the atrocious mandate of the first, the Egyptian Herod, not to a vague general thirst for Hebrew blood, and anxiety to extinguish the Hebrew race, but to a special oracle of some of his soothsayers, to the effect that a child was about being born who would emancipate Israel and discomfit Egypt. And the same service which the Hebrew mythology rendered to the Lawgiver of Israel, it also performed for the great Father of the faithful himself. A rabbinical tradition, quoted by Strauss, places Nimrod in the same relation to the infant Abraham that Pharaoh sustained to the infant Moses. Nimrod's wise men see a star which tells them that old Terah, of Ur of the Chaldees, has a son born to him, of whom will spring a mighty people; whereupon Nimrod orders a massacre, which massacre the child Abraham happily escapes. Here, again, we see that the legend of the nativity—or, if we suppose a post-Christian date for these rabbinical stories, *the tendency to produce* such legendary figments—was all in the Hebrew mind before ever any Christ was born (for it will hardly be said, in any case, that the rabbis imitated from the Christians). The Messiah could not be less honoured by peril and deliverance than the Patriarch and the Lawgiver. A new Nimrod, a new Pharaoh, would seek that young child's life in whom Israel's hope was treasured. And there he was—the very man—ready-made to the poet's hand; the crafty, cruel Herod seemed made on purpose to fill that place in the new mythus which the mighty hunter of men and the tyrant of Egypt had filled in the old mythi. And where should the royal infant take refuge? Where, but in Egypt, that land so rich in recollections from the old heroic age of Hebrew story? The

cradle of the Hebrew nation was the asylum of the Hebrew Messiah. There was at once geographical convenience and poetic fitness in the arrangement—sending the second Saviour for deliverance where the first had been imperilled. There was prophecy for it, too; for only thus could that ‘be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.’

For this is another significant feature of the mythus of the nativity. Every thing is done that something or other ‘may be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophets.’ It really is most instructive: the evangelist himself indicates the sources of his history at every point; he digresses every now and then to tell us where he gets his facts. He has no fewer than five expository quotations of prophecy; every one of them falsely and absurdly expounded, every one of them most scrupulously fulfilled. Thus, the Christ was to be born at Bethlehem—that was quite clear; it was a settled point in the Hebrew faith, an integral element of the Messianic idea. It was made a grand objection to the Messiahship of Jesus that he had not been born at Bethlehem. The fourth evangelist informs us that, when some of the people said, ‘Of a truth this is the prophet;’ and others, ‘This is the Christ,’ there were sceptics who objectingly asked, ‘Shall the Christ come out of Galilee? hath not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?’ A Galilean, a Nazarene Christ was no Christ at all: could any good thing come out of Nazareth? It was a crushing argument. Only allow the premises, and there was no help for the conclusion. The necessity would be early felt in the church, of putting this matter on a right and safe footing; and so, instead of the syllogism being taken thus, ‘The Christ must be born at Bethlehem, Jesus was not born at Bethlehem, therefore Jesus is not the Christ,’ they turned it round the other way, thus; ‘The Christ must be born at Bethlehem, Jesus is the Christ, therefore Jesus must have been born at Bethlehem.’ And therefore Jesus *was* born at Bethlehem; not without some violence to historical probability, some stretching of historical

fact—(the affair of the taxing, upon which Luke's account turns, is a very difficult one to make out satisfactorily); the problem is worked, by the two evangelists who undertake it, in two quite different ways—still it is worked, the thing is done, the Jewish objection is removed, and the objector silenced—Jesus the Christ is born at Bethlehem, literally and truly *in order that the Scripture may be fulfilled*.

The same with the genealogies. The Christ must be Son of David: Jesus was the Christ: therefore Jesus must have been a son of David: therefore Jesus was a son of David: therefore this is shewn in regular genealogy. As it was a point of some importance, once shewing it was not enough. By a mistaken excess of zeal, two genealogies are given to the church—genealogies, unfortunately, which no skill of man can reconcile: (the one gives twenty-seven generations between David and Christ, for forty-two of the other). And after all no man need care to reconcile them. They both answered their purpose very well, the one as well as the other. And they serve a purpose still. Do not cut them out, or put them in italics: let them live while the Bible lives, just where they are and as they are: they may be very useful—illustrating a moral truth now, as they helped out a theological dogma then: revealing the incongruity and self-destructiveness that ever are in falsehood; and teaching theologians and religionists, to the world's end, that however easy it may be to patch up a case to serve the turn, however plastic and manageable a thing fact may seem awhile in the hands of theory, it will break down at last at some point or other, and leave theory up in the clouds, or floating in emptiness somewhere about the region of the moon. These are lessons better worth our learning than even that Jesus of Nazareth, king of the world, was the great-great-grandson (whether in the twenty-seventh or in the forty-second generation) of David, king of Israel.

If we examine the subordinate and miscellaneous incidents, the interstitial fillings-in of these narratives, we find the same mythical character pervading the whole, the same fidelity maintained to prophetic and traditionary types. Every fact

is symbolical of an idea. The manger-cradle has fine mythical fitness. Antiquity ever loved this sort of contrast between a poor, mean, pinched-up present, and a rich, great, far-reaching future. The Father of gods and men was nursed in a cave on Ida; the Hebrew Emancipator once slept in an ark of bulrushes; and the infant God-with-us was wrapped in swaddling-clothes and laid in a manger, because there was no room in the inn. And there he was seen of shepherds. There is the poetry of humanity, of Hebrew humanity, in this too. The old world loved its shepherds. They were a consecrated order, a sort of priesthood of nature, dear to gods and men. Apollo was a shepherd once; and shepherds nursed young Cyrus for the throne of Persia. The Hebrew shepherd, in particular, was venerable as the type of the old patriarchal idea, the representative of the patriarchal time. Moses was called from keeping sheep to talk with God in the burning bush: David was taken from the sheep-cote to be king of Israel: who but shepherds should speak the first welcome to David's son? Yet not to shepherds only was the divine epiphany vouchsafed: there is one other scene in this drama of the nativity, as rich in moral and poetic beauty, and with yet more of mythical suggestiveness. For there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, who had had revelations from the holy spirit that he should not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ; and there was one Anna, a prophetess, a widow of about fourscore and four years, who departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day; and when the child Jesus, born under the law, was brought to the temple to be done unto after the custom of the law, they—this father and mother in Israel—hailed and blessed the holy child, and spoke the *Nunc dimittis* of age laying its work and its hope on the head of youth. And so out of the mouth of two witnesses, the most venerable that Israel could furnish—a prophet and a prophetess, robed in the mingled sanctities of age and office—and in the very temple itself, was fitting testimony borne to him whom Providence destined to be a light to the Gentiles and a glory to Israel.

This completes the Gospel of the Infancy. Angels and shepherds, magi and prophets, even a Herod king of Judea—all have done their several parts, all prophecies are so far fulfilled, all the parallelisms of history are duly observed, all traditional types are realised in their antitype; expectation is satisfied; a glory is on the brow of the divine babe; and the child returns into Galilee, to Nazareth, there to grow, and wax strong in spirit, and be filled with wisdom and with grace.

After all, there is a truth in that idea or tendency of the Hebrew mind to which we owe these legends of the birth and infancy of the world's Saviour. It seems a strange conceit perhaps, on a first view, that of supposing that every prophet must needs be like every other prophet; coming into the world by the same sort of miracle, subjected in infancy to the same sort of peril, and delivered by prodigy and marvel—nothing to be done without a fulfilment of some old prophecy. And so it is a strange conceit, when spun out in this way into detail and literality; but still there is a truth at the bottom of it. There are parallelisms of a very remarkable sort, in the comings and goings of reformers and their reforms. The great strife of the Two Principles, and of the men and the institutions respectively representative of them, goes on, in all ages and under all its forms, very much after one type. We may trace certain leading analogies in the ways of God with man, that will rarely deceive us. The history of moral truth is very much the same in one age that it is in another age. Its nativity is commonly cast in poverty, neglect and storm, as

‘ It was the winter wild
While the heaven-born child
All meanly wrapt in the rude manger lay.’

It is born in an evil time; perhaps under some Herod of a king, in some Judea of priests, bigots and pharisees, all conspiring together to kill it; born before the world is ready for it; there is no room for it in this inn. Yet there is a Providence with it still: angels of God are over it, the sons of the morning shout over its cradle for joy, in music sweet

which wins some ears; and gentle hearts ponder what these things shall mean; and old hearts grow young again, and chant their *Nunc dimittis*; and it visibly grows in stature and in favour both with God and man. Its beginnings are ever small; when it comes, it comes not with observation; men question, for a long time, of a new gospel, whether this be that which should come, or whether they are to look for another. And it gets persecuted, is a sign to be spoken against, and many a sword pierces the hearts that love it. And it gets disappointed too: the kingdom of heaven always seems to be coming, and coming, yet does not come. The hope that 'Time will run back and fetch the age of gold,' or run forward and fetch the millennium; that 'speckled vanity will sicken soon and die,' does not realise itself: for

—— 'wisest Fate says, No!
This must not yet be so.'

Things go on slowly in God's world; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Yet it is growth, whether we see it or not with the naked eye; growth like that of the least of seeds into the greatest of trees; growth like that of this planet, from the early times which geological science alone chronicles, into our world; growth like that of Christ's six hours, or three hours, on the cross, into a divine 'worship of sorrow' that lasts eighteen centuries; growth calmly onward, as are all the vital forces of great wonder-working nature. Storms do their work, and pass away. Clouds come and go, but the Eternal Sunshine remains behind the clouds, just looking through from time to time to shew that it is there. Frauds, follies, vanities, ambitions pass away—they have no root in them—but Truth lives, the Immanuel, the eternal God-with-us.

LECTURE III.

I ADVERTED, in the first of these Lectures, to our want of any clear, decisive external evidence of what theologians call the *genuineness* of the gospel histories; that is, their authorship by men bearing the names, occupying the position, or even living in the age of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This genuineness is not a proved point. The advocates of Christianity are in the habit of assuming more largely, and inferring more promptly, in this matter, than the real state of the evidence at all warrants. The fact is, we cannot quite confidently trace our four gospels higher up into antiquity than somewhere past the middle of the second century; that is, we do not find in ecclesiastical literature, until that time, clear quotations from written gospels that we can certainly identify with the gospels in our canon. How long these books existed before that, we do not know. What the first oral tradition of the Life of Jesus was, we do not know. How that tradition might have got altered, in different localities and under different influences of opinion and feeling, what elements it may have taken up, and what it may have parted with, we do not know. How near our gospels come to the first tradition, and to the reality which that tradition more or less truly represented—in other words, to what extent they possess the true historic character, the eye-and-ear-witness character—we do not know. We know that there were a good many gospels in the early times of Christianity, and that, within about a century and a quarter after the death of Jesus, these four had come to be *the* gospels, known and read of all men, while the others gradually died out: but why these four, and only these, more than any other four—who wrote them—when, where, with what materials—all this belongs to the debatable ground of literary history.

In the deficiency and ambiguousness of the external evidence on this matter, our recourse must be to the internal evidence. As nobody that we can trust distinctly tells us that these books possess the strictly historical character, we must judge of them by what they are in themselves—see if they look like histories. Do these unknown men, whom, for convenience-sake, we may still continue to call Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—do they write, on the whole, and taking one with another, like eye and ear witnesses recording facts which they have seen and heard? Do they write even like careful and favourably posited inquirers, recording fact and only fact—fact diligently and accurately sifted—fact unmixed with fable, undefaced by legendary additions or improvements?

I think not. Looking at the books in a broad, general way, comparing one with another, and judging all by the impression which all collectively make, it does not seem to me that they exhibit, with anything like constancy and thoroughness, the characteristics of legitimate history. Parts, here and there, have a wonderful air of naturalness and verisimilitude; but the books, taken as a whole, puzzle one. They are the most difficult books in the world to make anything of in the way of a history—a clearly developed succession of events that can be supposed to have actually occurred. The discrepancies are endless. And it is not true—what we have so often and so long been told—that these discrepancies are of such a kind as to enhance general credibility by excluding particular collusive agreement. They are not of that kind. The discrepancies of the gospels are not like those which arise between different witnesses, seeing and reporting different parts of one and the same thing: they are too marked and wide for that. It must have been a work of time to produce versions so different as we again and again have of one event; so that repeatedly it is a question with harmonists, whether we have two facts, or only two various readings of one fact. They seem to be not independent testimonies that we have, but independent traditions: the wide divergence of the rays indicates and measures remoteness from the centre.

I shall not go much into detail on a matter of this kind;

those who feel sufficient interest in it may investigate it for themselves; but just compare, in a rough, general way, those two versions of Christ and Christianity which we have—the one in the first three gospels taken collectively, and the other in the fourth gospel—and say which of these is historical. We have two distinctly different Christs, two different Christianities, in Matthew, Mark and Luke, on the one hand, and in John, on the other. The events are different, the localities are different, the tone and spirit of the Teacher, the mode of his teaching, the substance of it—all these things are different in the one exhibition from what they are in the other. On the one side of the comparison, we have Galilee for Christ's local centre of action; the interest of the whole revolves around Capernaum and the Lake; if he temporarily leaves Galilee, a special reason is commonly assigned for it; and he appears in Jerusalem but once, at the crucifixion-passover. On the other side, we have Jerusalem for Christ's local centre of action; he appears in Jerusalem five times; four times that he leaves Jerusalem or its neighbourhood, a reason is specially assigned for it; the interest of the whole revolves around Jerusalem and the Temple. The Galilean Christ is a great exorcist, a caster-out of demons: the Jerusalem Christ does not one of that description of wonderful works. Then the one Christ is in marked contrast to the other, as a Teacher. The Christ of the Galilean gospels is a moral reformer, popular and practical, a prophet, a preacher of righteousness, whom the common people hear gladly: the other Christ is a mystic, a theologian of the Alexandrine school, discoursing of his divine sonship, his coming down from heaven, the need of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, and other things of that kind; he is perpetually mystifying and puzzling his auditors, and he really seems to do it on purpose. The Galilean Christ loves to speak in parables; the parable is the most characteristic feature of his way of teaching: the Christ of the fourth gospel never speaks in parables; there is not a parable in the whole book. The Galilean gospels (especially the first, which is perhaps the nearest, on the whole, to the earlier tradition) are all about the 'kingdom of heaven:' the fourth gospel has not

the phrase 'kingdom of heaven' in it; and, which is more to the point, it takes us into a quite different world of ideas from that to which the phrase belongs. We have here got far away from the old gospel of the kingdom, to a new gospel of the Logos and the Paraclete. There is a singular mannerism all through this fourth gospel. Christ is made to say the same sort of things over and over again (even to the most different descriptions of auditors), and in the same sort of technical phraseology, and his auditors make the same sort of mistakes over and over again: the Samaritan woman and the Master in Israel, the Pharisees in the temple of Jerusalem and the populace in the synagogue of Capernaum, are all equally dull, dull after the same type and pattern of dulness. John the Baptist, too, is made to think the same thoughts and speak the same speech with Jesus; those thoughts and that speech having singular affinity to what we find in an epistle bearing the name of the writer of the gospel. Altogether, the Christ of the Galilean gospels is a different being from the Christ of John's gospel. There is psychological impossibility in the notion of these two pictures being copied at first hand from one reality.

Then, if we compare the first three gospels with one another, or take any one of them singly, we encounter at every point discrepancy, confusion, looseness of statement and description. Sometimes we have widely different growths from one germ of fact—(the case of the anointing of Jesus by a woman affords a remarkable instance of this); at other times, again, we have the opposite extreme of a minute verbal accordance, such as mere coincidence cannot account for. We find these characteristics pervading the books in question to an extent which precludes the notion of their authorship by eye-witnesses, or even by competent and well-positing inquirers. The gospels have very much the character of compilations; early written record, perhaps, worked in with later tradition. In Matthew, for instance, there are things, not a few, that seem to take us close to Christ himself; and there are other things, such as the Trinitarian baptismal commission, which have a strong tang of the second century in them. They seem to be books of a heterogeneous character;

partly history, partly legend; fact mixed with tradition, with the differing traditions of different localities; fact idealised, made representative of ideas, hung round with a drapery of mythus. Sometimes we have facts made out of ideas; as in the initial chapters of Matthew and Luke, where we have a whole world—two worlds—of narrative, without one single credible reality; genealogies, miraculous births, angels, dreams, a star in the east, and a massacre of innocents—all this wonderful creation exhaling up from the Hebrew fancy like a Fata Morgana; the whole done that the Scripture might be fulfilled, that old Hebrew prophecy might have its accomplishment, that the types of Hebrew legend might meet their antitype. We have there seen what kind of a world it is we are coming into; a mythical, legendary, poetic world, where all ideas are realised in facts, and all prophecies get themselves fulfilled. We have there seen what the spirit of mythus is capable of doing; and thus we have obtained an insight into the principles of this species of literary composition, which we may find of material service as we proceed with our inquiries.

From the accounts of the Birth and Infancy, Dr. Strauss passes to the history of the Public Life of Jesus. I shall, in this Lecture, take two or three of the leading points that arise in this part of the work before us (exclusively of the miracles, which I reserve till afterwards), and shall give you some further illustrations of the kind of books our gospels are, and of the nature and results of that peculiar criticism to which our Author subjects them.

The first chapter is on the Relation of Jesus to John the Baptist. This is a subject, perhaps, on which few of us would think of raising a question. It all seems very clear and straightforward: John was the forerunner of the Christ, and bore testimony to Jesus as the Christ; he had a subsidiary, preparatory work to do, and when it was done he retired; he was but a voice crying in the wilderness, the dawn before the sunrise, the prophet heralding the king. The evangelists seem, on a first view, tolerably clear and unanimous about this. They all exhibit John in relations of conscious and

confessed inferiority to Jesus; he had nothing to do but prepare the way for his greater successor, and retire when the way was prepared. They are very copious and explicit in their report of John's testimony on this point: he was not the Christ, but was sent before the Christ; not the bridegroom, but the bridegroom's friend; there was one mightier than himself, coming after him but preferred before him, the latchet of whose shoes he was not worthy to unloose; and Jesus of Nazareth was that mighty one. They all put it very strongly. The fourth evangelist makes the Baptist talk like a Christian of the school of Alexandria, about a Christ coming down from heaven, and a Lamb of God taking away the world's sin. Matthew represents him as even objecting to baptise Jesus: the poor, outer water-baptism was not for him who baptised with the spirit. Luke does it more strongly still; he dates the subordination of John to Jesus some months before the birth of either: the one unborn babe is moved by mysterious affinities towards the other unborn babe. On the whole it would appear, at first sight, among the plainest of historical facts, that the mission of John the Baptist was to herald the way of Jesus the Christ: the evangelists all say that it was, and the idea of such a mission involves nothing essentially incredible. Yet it turns out, on a nearer view, that this seemingly so clear case is all exceedingly obscure. The unanimous and earnest evangelic testimony is liable to certain grave doubts; the facts to which this testimony is borne cannot stand upright by the side of other facts; the testimony contradicts itself, too, at more than one point; and we soon find reason to suspect that we are still upon unhistorical ground, still in the world of poetry and legend—the world where prophecy, mythical parallelism and theological convenience create fact after their own likeness. I will state the grounds of this scepticism, as they are given by Dr. Strauss. The subject is, indeed, of no great importance in itself, one way or the other: but it possesses considerable incidental interest, as adding another illustration to those we have had already, of the way in which history formed itself in the early Christian church.

The evangelists' conception of the ministry of John the Baptist is, that it was merely subsidiary to that of Jesus; consisted in preparing for the Christ before he came, and testifying to him when he did come. Now the one great fact which makes this representation apocryphal is, that John the Baptist *made a sect, and left a sect*; which sect long continued to maintain a distinct existence, appeared sometimes in antagonistic relations to Christ and his followers, and needed special apostolic efforts to proselyte it to Christianity. We find in the Book of Acts, that there were disciples of John the Baptist as far off as Ephesus, and more than twenty years after John's death, whom Paul had to re-proselyte and re-baptise into the name of Jesus: nay, there are religionists in the East to this day (the Sabian or Mendeian sect) who hold John's name in reverence, and profess themselves votaries of his doctrine. Very unlike all this seems to a mere mission of preparation; very singular that John the Baptist did not make his own disciples disciples of Jesus: the natural inference is that he did not try. If John had historically been what our books represent him as being—a mere herald of the Christ,—he would scarcely have done what our books also represent him as doing—gone on making proselytes of his own, and founding a sect of his own, when the Christ was actually come. His work was then over. He had nothing to do but to pass on his scholars into the school of Jesus; he ought to have given up; and, if too old to become himself a scholar, he might, at least, have ceased from being a master. It looks very much as if John had been no forerunner of Jesus at all, except by subsequent theological implication, but a prophet on his own account.

Then the representations of the evangelists disagree in the most marked manner. Matthew makes the Baptist all but refuse to baptise Jesus—‘I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?’—the fourth evangelist makes him twice over emphatically deny all knowledge of Jesus until the descent of the holy spirit at the baptism. The probability is that there were, very early, two separate traditions on the subject, embodying different theological ideas, and decorated

with different pictorial imagery; both glorifying Christ, but with diversity of mode and form. The one of these traditions took its point of departure from the miraculous nativities of John and Jesus: this (involving, as it did, the relationship of the two prophets and the supernatural revelations accompanying the birth of each) required and supposed the previous mutual knowledge, as we have it in Matthew. The other took its point of departure from the descent of the holy spirit, as setting the seal of God upon his Christ: this was more striking and telling without the previous mutual knowledge, as we have it in John. These traditions prevailed in different parts of the church, and were adopted by different evangelists, as local position or individual preference might suggest. This seems the simplest way of taking the matter.

The most remarkable thing, however, in the mutual relations of John and Jesus (and that which looks most like an historical reality) is what Matthew and Luke tell us respecting the message which John, during his imprisonment, sent to Jesus:—"When John heard in his prison of the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" So that, after all the miracles and revelations—the angels, the voice, the dove—after his own utterances, too, about the Lamb of God, the Bridegroom, and the Man who, coming after him was preferred before him—after all this John actually did not know whether Jesus was the Christ or not, and had to send to ask the question. Nay, it would even seem, from the way in which the account is worded, that we have here the query not of incipient scepticism, but of incipient faith; that John was then just beginning to believe, and desired *data* for believing with more assurance. It was 'hearing of the works of Jesus' that suggested the inquiry; which seems to indicate not the decay of a faith, but the birth and growth of a faith. Very strange all this, again. John was commissioned, expressly and solely, to tell Israel that Jesus was the Christ, and yet he has to send, just before his death, to ask the question.

These are the phenomena of our gospels with reference to

this subject :—knowledge affirmed at one time, and denied at another time ; a mission of preparation, which, instead of terminating with the event to which it was preparatory, goes on just the same afterwards as before, and leaves results that rather interfere with its own alleged purpose ; a forerunner of the Christ, who at one time bears testimony to Jesus like a man deep in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and at another time begins to imagine that Jesus may be the Christ, and sends to inquire—inconsistency, contradiction, psychological impossibility everywhere.

Reconciliation of such incongruities is obviously out of the question. Yet, if we cannot reconcile a contradiction, it may not be hopeless to attempt an explanation of it—a *rationale* of the way in which it came to be. The real course of things we may suppose to have been something of this kind. John comes to Israel preaching the baptism of repentance—a grand national lustration—in the spirit of one of those prophets of old to whom the word of the Lord had come, saying, ‘ Wash you, make you clean ; I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean ; and I will put my spirit within you, and ye shall again be my people, and I will be your God.’ John preaches this in the spirit and power of a second Elijah, and his voice stirs Israel’s heart to its depths ; he gets disciples about him, giving them fasts to keep, prayers to say, and a morality to do ; he founds a large and thriving sect, with repentance and hope for its bond of spiritual fellowship, and baptism for its visible symbol. All this goes on for a while, until the fortress of Machærus receives the over-bold denouncer of a vicious government and priesthood : and when, during his imprisonment, he hears of the works of Jesus, just then rising into fame as a prophet, and perhaps more than a prophet, the hope dawns within him that possibly this is the Christ (a distant and dubious hope it would be, from the dilatory cautiousness, so unlike a Messiah, that marked the proceedings of Jesus), and he sends two of his disciples to ask the question ; with what result to his own mind, we have no means of knowing.

Something of this kind I conceive to have been the real

historical aspect of John the Baptist and his mission. The whole affair was collateral to Jesus and his mission. John's disciples were distinct from the disciples of Jesus; if John bore testimony to Jesus, John's disciples do not seem to have heeded that testimony; there was jealousy and antagonism (as regarded the adherents of each) rather than sympathy and fellowship: there were two distinct and separate streams of moral influence and missionary action. But now see what the spirit of legend and mythus makes of this. Jesus the Christ appeared about the same time with John the Baptist, moved by the same spirit of moral reform that moved John, though with a distincter self-consciousness, a higher aim, and a wider ultimate result. Both missions were the growth of one time, one literature, one national idea; perhaps the later and grander of the two not uninfluenced, in the way of suggestion and impulse, by the prior and inferior one. And so, in another generation or two, when the baptism of John was overshadowed and eclipsed by the gospel of the Christ, and the actual historical features of the period were dimmed by distance, it came to be taken for granted—the past being interpreted by the analogy of the present—that John had been the forerunner of Jesus, and nothing else than that; had testified to Jesus; had been sent to do that, and only that. The testimony was then put into words. Evangelists made John speak as they would have spoken if they had been in John's place; made him speak all the more emphatically, perhaps, for the sake of the yet unconverted followers of John: for, as Strauss significantly observes in a note, the fourth gospel, which speaks the most plainly of them all, is assigned by ecclesiastical tradition to the very locality (Ephesus) where Paul found a party of the Baptist's followers. And then the Messiah must have had a forerunner. David was anointed by Samuel, the first great prophet after Moses; and so the Son of David must be anointed by the last of the prophets. The Scripture itself had said, too, that Elijah would come before the day of the Lord: well, an Elijah did come—this was he. Altogether, it was a very clear case: the mythical spirit had materials in abundance to work with:

and so, by the time the traditions that form the basis of our gospels came to be collected and put into writing, the work was done, and the reformer-prophet, who had preached the baptism of repentance and preparation for the Messianic age, was peculiarised into the herald and witness of Jesus the Messiah. Some of the old facts, however, remain along with the newer legend—they *shew through*, just enough of them to awaken suspicion and point inquiry; and, with all the poetry of the nativity, the marvels of the baptism, and the mystical theology of the fourth evangelist's John the Baptist, it still oozes through, that John knew nothing at all about Jesus before he baptised him, did not very confidently know him afterwards, and (after all that he had said about the baptism of the holy ghost) left a sect behind him that had 'never so much as heard that there was any holy ghost.' This is Strauss's view of the relative proportions of fact and fiction in the New Testament accounts of the relation of John to Jesus.

Our Author's next chapter is on the Baptism and Temptation of Jesus. There are some considerable difficulties in the Baptism, taken in its simplest form. *Was Jesus ever baptised by John at all?* is a question, the negative side of which is not without a fair show of reason. It seems a strange, unmeaning thing—the Messiah being baptised into the faith of his own coming, undergoing the baptism of repentance to purify him for receiving himself. One may suppose, indeed, that the conception of his Messiahship came after the Baptism; though that, again, has difficulties: the laws by which minds like Christ's grow, and the after-facts of Christ's life, will not readily allow of our dating so late the birth of the governing idea of his moral being. There is one way of rationalising the matter. It was a Jewish expectation (we get this from Justin Martyr) that the Messiah would be anointed to his office by Elijah; and John was the Elijah who was to come, and the baptism was the anointing. This would give the transaction meaning and intelligibility. It may be said that this would account for the tradition without

the transaction; that the idea might have made the fact, here as elsewhere, by the law of mythical fitness. So it might: and therefore we may content ourselves to leave it an open question, with about as much to be said on the one side as on the other, whether Jesus ever was baptised at all by the new Elijah, the prophet of the leathern girdle and the camel's hair.

This is not the only difficulty, however, that arises here. There is much questionable matter in the form, the physical concomitants of the transaction. The supernaturalism of it, the voice from heaven, the spirit descending like a dove, are things about which theologians have doubted and speculated, from Origen downward. How the heavens should open (which are always open), and how the Spirit that, unseen, fills immensity, should move from one place to another place, in bodily shape like a dove—these are not easy questions to men who ever allow themselves to make a question of anything. The rationalists accordingly have been busy, as usual, at the work of explaining. Thunder and lightning have been put in requisition. By some theologians, a meteor has been created for the occasion, something like a dove. By others, a real living dove has been supposed; and Professor Paulus works very hard to make his dove tame enough to enact the part assigned to it in this sacred drama; a difficulty which Mr. Furness, of the United States (in his book entitled “Jesus and his Biographers”), disposes of with a burst of eloquence: he “finds no insurmountable difficulty in the belief that the gentle creature was drawn, through that mysterious sympathy which pervades all things, towards Jesus, his countenance, as he ascended from the water, being upturned in prayer, and glowing in every feature with infinite blessedness.”

There is no need, however, of mysterious sympathies, thunder and lightning, meteor or dove. It is a very simple business. Given the fact that John baptised Jesus, or given the idea that John ought to have baptised Jesus, and must have baptised him—and all the rest runs on clearly and smoothly enough. It was all in prophecy already. Any

Hebrew could have told how the Messiah ought to be baptised. 'This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased'—it needed no thunder-peal to say this: there it was, in Isaiah; 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him.' There it was in the Psalm, too; 'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;'—the very words, by the way, in which the earlier gospel, quoted by Justin Martyr, clothes the transaction—only the latter part of the quotation was ultimately dropped in favour of that theology which made the sonship commence at a period long before the baptism. It had all been said, ages before, by psalmists and prophets; the divine voice at the Jordan was only the fulfilling of an old prophecy, the actualising of an old idea. If Jesus the Christ was to be baptised at all, of course this spoken voice would be a part of the baptism. It was a settled point.

The descent of the holy spirit was another settled point. 'I have put my spirit upon him'—this was the prophetic designation of God's Messiah: 'there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his root; and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him:'—there it was already. As the fourth evangelist makes John say, 'I saw the spirit descending from heaven, like a dove, and it abode upon him.' It was quite in the mode of Hebrew antiquity to accompany official investiture with the bestowment of the spirit, or power, needed for the office. 'Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed the son of Jesse in the midst of his brethren; and the spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward:' it abode upon him. Nothing more natural. The descent of the spirit was a part of the baptismal anointing or chrism. The Christ would not have been the Christ without it.

And *how* should the spirit descend? Some bodily shape, visible appearance, some shekinah, seemed but fitting to symbolise the divine fact. And what should this be? How should the spirit descend but—*like a dove*? The dove, Strauss observes, is a sacred bird in the East; the symbol of nature's life-giving warmth, of the vital, genial heat of being. It

symbolises that agency of the spirit of God described in the Mosaic cosmogony as the 'moving upon the face of the waters'—brooding over the infinite, formless deep of things. One of the Rabbis says, 'The spirit of God moved upon the waters like a dove.' Noah's dove moved upon the face of the waters; was the symbol, the ministering angel of the world's second creation out of chaos. It was one of the heresies alleged against the Samaritans, that they worshipped God under the form of a dove. This was Milton's poetical worship:—

"Thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant."

Altogether it seems a natural conception, this of the spirit descending like a dove. There was mythical fitness and poetic beauty in it. If the spirit of God came upon the Christ in any bodily shape, it would come in this shape—like a dove, lighting upon him and abiding with him.

This is the mythus of the Baptism. It is true that it does not fit in very well with the rest of the evangelists' theology. The incarnate Logos of one writer, and the literal, physical Sonship of two others, are in marked incongruity with the notion of a descent of the holy spirit, then and there, at the baptism, as if for the first time. The conceptions are mutually contradictory and destructive. The *inherent* messiahship (or divinity), from birth or from before birth, excludes, or is excluded by, the *bestowed* messiahship commencing on the banks of the Jordan with the baptism by John, when Jesus began to be about thirty years old: (the Ebionites, by the way, felt this incongruity, and took the liberty of adjusting their creed into rationality by cutting out the legend of the nativity). The two notions must have grown up in different localities, under different theological and philosophical influences, probably at different times. Jewish prophecy and poetry, Heathen mythology, the Alexandrine Judaico-Platonism—each gave something; and, after a time (it would be a work of time), men's minds would get used to this patchwork, party-coloured or-

thodoxy, and the whole of it would live and grow harmoniously together. For men do get used to these things; as Strauss says, "Legend is loath to part with any portion of its once-gained treasures." Our Church of England is not incommoded by her three creeds; says and sings them all on the days appointed, the one as good humouredly as the other. They come from different ages, express different theologies, represent different schools, contradict one another point-blank; but no matter for that. Legend is loath to part with any of its treasures, and ecclesiastics would grudge to relinquish even one of their spare creeds. In this sense at least, we mind the moral of the parable which directs that the tares and the wheat shall grow together. It would take time, however. Two contradictory theologies would not immediately find their way into one gospel; a consideration, I think, which proves much against both the unity and the earliness of the authorship of our books, indicates their piecemeal construction, and their unapostolic origin in a comparatively low antiquity.

The Temptation in the Wilderness has occasioned theologians much perplexity. The forty-days' fast—a fast which has moral incongruity against it as well as physical difficulty—(if voluntary, it was inviting the devil; if enjoined by Deity, it was giving the devil a dangerous opening, an unfair advantage),—and then the colloquy with the devil, the bandying of texts, the journeyings to and fro through the air, with the other circumstances of this extraordinary scene—have ever been a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence even to the all-enduring, all-believing spirit of scripturalist orthodoxy. Many the experiments at making this stone bread. Now, it is a vision supernaturally exhibited to the mind of Christ (some say, by God, others, by the devil), indicating, by way of premonition, the temptations that would befall him in the course of his public life. Now, it is a natural vision, a faintness, an ecstasy, a reverie; during which the ideas exhibited in the narrative pass successively through the mind of the emaciated and exhausted Son of God, and he thinks he holds a conversation with the devil. Some make it a dream. According to

another version, it is a parable addressed by Jesus to his disciples, to expound the moral conditions, liabilities and uses of miraculous power. Others take it as a real temptation figuratively exhibited; a narrative, couched in the dialect of the Oriental diabolism, of an 'experience' of Christ's; a description of thoughts that really passed through his mind at a given time and place, of temptations to the misuse of miraculous power that actually presented themselves and were actually repelled; the history of which experience he detailed to the disciples, that they might put it upon record for the world's instruction to the end of time. The rationalists of Germany have not been idle in this fertile field of speculation. They regard the Temptation (some of them) as a real, external occurrence—only misunderstood and supernaturalised, as usual, by the inveterate and ever-active excitableness of the Oriental and Hebrew imagination. On this theory, the Tempter was a man; a cunning Pharisee emissary from the Sanhedrim, sent out to see what Jesus really was, to scrutinise his purposes, read his character, test his alleged miraculous powers, and try if he could be gained over to the interests of the priesthood and the uses of political partisanship. This Pharisee was the devil of the scene: the angels that appeared at the end, when the devil was gone, and ministered to Jesus, were no other than a party of travellers who happened to be going that way with provisions:—and the grand difficulty of the whole, that of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them being shewn to Jesus from the top of a mountain, is got over with singular dexterity; it is most felicitously suggested that this Pharisee-devil may have shewn the young Messiah all the kingdoms of the world—in a map.

Dr. Strauss's view of the matter is perhaps less ingenious than this, but it is many degrees more satisfactory. He takes the Temptation altogether as a mythus; a poetical filling-in of a crisis in the Messiah's history, suggested by the parallelisms of Hebrew legend, and inspired by the instinct of mythical fitness. He begins with observing that the Satan, the principle or power of evil, borrowed by the later Jews from the Persian theology, was peculiarised by them, just in the same

way that they peculiarised Deity; placed in special relations of hostility to themselves, as the great enemy of the Hebrew race and the Lord of their Gentile foes. And consequently, as the interests of Israel were concentrated in the person of the Messiah, it was natural that Satan should be the especial enemy and rival of the Messiah: the idea of Jesus as the Christ involves, therefore, every where in the New Testament, the counterpart and correlative idea of Satan as the foe of his person and his work. The Messiah appears that he may destroy the works of the devil; and the devil, on his part, is busy sowing tares among the good seed. It was quite in accordance, then, with the laws and requirements of mythical propriety, that Satan should collect all his strength in one grand effort to conquer or corrupt the young king of Israel at the very outset of his reign.

And then our Author goes on to shew, by a variety of instances, that the idea of temptation, moral trial, as a discipline for the friends of God, has ever been familiar to the Hebrew mind. Abraham was tried, or tempted; Job was tempted; Israel collectively had a forty-years' temptation in a wilderness. The temptation of Abraham is of peculiar significance in this connexion, when taken with the additions and improvements of rabbinical legend. It was discovered by the Jewish theologians that God was induced to try Abraham, by the suggestion and request of Satan. And that was not enough; but a regular scenic representation was got up, in which Satan meets Abraham on his way to Moriah, and there they hold a colloquy—the Patriarch and the Devil—in Scripture texts, too, chapter and verse, text against text, exactly as our evangelists picture Christ's temptation:—and then, when the patriarch triumphs, the devil leaves him, and the angel of the Lord appears just at the critical moment, ministering to the father of the faithful the well-earned meed of fidelity and obedience. A kindred tradition employs Satan to tempt Israel during the forty years in the wilderness:—“when Moses went up to the mountain-top, he said, After forty days I shall return, in the sixth hour; and when the forty days were elapsed, and Moses did not return, Satan came.”

I think this is almost exposition enough of the accounts in our gospels: for, whatever uncertainty may attach to the time at which these rabbinical notions passed from oral tradition into written legend, we may be tolerably sure that they are, in no respect, of Christian origin; Jewish rabbis would scarcely copy from Christian evangelists. The idea of temptation—temptation by the devil—was, we see, familiar to the Hebrew mind. Abraham was tempted, Israel was tempted (both by the devil); and how should Abraham's seed and Israel's Messiah not be tempted likewise? Actually, there is a passage in another rabbinical work, quoted by Strauss, in which Satan is introduced soliciting God for permission *to tempt the Messiah and his generation*: and, though there the issue is different from what it is in our evangelic legend (as Satan's suit is rejected, and the Deity distinctly declares that he will kill the devil if he perseveres, rather than let one soul of the Messiah's generation perish), still the case is in point, as shewing that the idea had a root in the Hebrew mind. Satanic temptation, conflict with the devil, was an element of the messianic idea; and a gospel of the Messiah would be incomplete without it.

And where should the Temptation be? Where, but in a Wilderness? It was in the wilderness that Israel, the collective Son of God, was tempted—tempted for forty years long (always that mystical *forty*)—tempted, according to the rabbis, at the end of a forty-days' absence of the Lawgiver. And the forty-days' fast—it was a thing of course. Moses fasted forty days and forty nights on Mount Horeb in the wilderness, and neither ate bread nor drank water. Elijah the same; he went, in the strength of one meal, to the same Mount Horeb in the wilderness, and there, like the Lawgiver before him and the Messiah after him, fasted forty days and forty nights. It was a clear case of type and antitype. The Messiah, too, must have his miraculous fast and his satanic temptation, by all the rules of mythical propriety. He must fast for forty days in the wilderness, as Moses and Elijah fasted before him. He must be tempted in the wilderness for forty days, as Israel was tempted in the wilderness for

forty years; tempted by hunger, as Israel was before him; tempted to presumptuous sin, as Israel was before him; tempted to tempt God, as Israel was before him (according to the idiom of the familiar text, "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness, when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years"); tempted to devil-worship, or idolatry, as Israel was before him; tempted by the devil, in Scripture-texts, as Abraham was before him, according to the rabbis; victorious through all, like himself, Messiah of God as he was, come to destroy the works of the devil—and then ministered unto by angels, as angels ministered unto Elijah.

And if, in this Temptation in the Wilderness, there is mythical fitness for the Hebrew fancy, still more is there moral truth in it for the common human heart. It is all true, every word of it. The parallelism of type and antitype still holds. We are all tempted, to this hour, very much after the similitude of Christ's temptation. The Wilderness and the Devil are still with us: many devils there are, busy and crafty ones, as many as are our greeds, our vanities, and our ambitions. They know where and when to find us. With the sagacity of true devil-nature, they ask little and promise much—only fall down and worship them, and they will give us all things. Well for him who has one short answer for them all—the stern, prompt 'Get thee hence, Satan,' of a heart true to the One True, and serving only Him. The victory of the principles brings, now as then, the repose of the affections:—angels of heaven they are, visiting the very wilderness itself with food for the worn and wearied Son of God.

LECTURE IV.

BEFORE going to the main subject of this Lecture—the Miracles of Christ's Public Life—I may mention one of Dr. Strauss's miscellaneous illustrations of the Evangelic Mythos, shewing the way in which fact shaped itself in the traditions of the early church, and clothed itself in mythical imagery out of the ever-ready wardrobe of Old-Testament legend. I allude to the gospel accounts of the Calling of the Apostles. We are told by the first two evangelists that, 'as Jesus walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew, casting a net into the sea (for they were fishers), and he said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men; and straightway they left their nets and followed him.' And, a little further on, he 'saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them; and straightway they left the ship and their father, and followed him.' And we also read elsewhere, that 'Jesus saw a man named Matthew sitting at the receipt of custom; and he said unto him, Follow me; and he arose, left all, and followed him.' All this strikes one as singular—this unexplained readiness of fishermen and publicans to leave their nets and fishing, their parents, their posts of public duty, and their unsettled public accounts, on the brief verbal summons even of a prophet. Professor Paulus, indeed, has a very short solution at hand, as regards the call of Matthew. He thinks that the 'Follow me' was simply an intimation to the Publican (who had invited Jesus to a feast that day) that the morning's work was over, and that the Prophet was ready to accompany his entertainer home, and partake of his hospitalities—'Follow me, I have done now, and am ready to go:' though in that case, as Strauss remarks, the more polite and

appropriate phrase would have been, 'I will follow thee,' rather than the short, peremptory 'Follow me.' The true explanation of the matter is to be found, as usual, in the Old Testament, where we have a not inapt precedent for the whole story:—'Elijah found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth; and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him; and he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee; and he said unto him, Go back again:' and he returned for a while, and afterwards 'he arose, and went after Elijah.' This is the Hebrew model of a 'Follow me;' the type of a prophet's summons to his disciple and successor. There is fine suggestiveness in it. It is rich in the poetry of contrast: on the one side, the coarse material handicraft and its implements, the plough, the oxen, the nets, the fishes, the seat of custom—on the other, prophetic inspiration and authority, fishing of men, thrones in the kingdom of God. The type would not be lost sight of; and when evangelists came to write of the Calling of the Apostles, they would perfectly well know how to do it. There was the material form ready-made for the moral fact. The fishermen-apostles at their nets and fishing, the publican-apostle at the receipt of custom, would hear and obey, like Elisha at his plough, the divine 'Follow me.' With a difference, however: the obedience would be prompt and unquestioning. There must be no saying 'Let me go back this once to my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee,' or 'I must prove my new-bought yoke of oxen, and then I will follow thee;' that would not do for Apostles of the Christ; they left all *straightway*—ship, nets, father, and receipt of custom—and immediately followed him. It is sufficiently plain here, what is fact, and what mythical embellishment. The fact was, that Jesus had followers, some of whom had once been fishermen, and another a publican: the rest is poetry, fact crystallised into mythus.

The *number* of the apostles, again—twelve, neither more nor less, with seventy of lower degree—this has a somewhat

mythical look, when one remembers the twelve tribes of Israel; the seventy elders of Israel, coadjutors of Moses, upon whom the Lord put the spirit of prophecy; the seventy members of the Sanhedrim, too: to which Strauss adds that, according to rabbinical and early Christian notion, there were seventy Gentile nations and languages. Now one can hardly imagine Christ making up a college of apostles, like a college of cardinals, by the rule of this mystic arithmetic: the poetical proprieties of it shew pretty plainly that it belongs to the world of poetry. It fits in so very well: twelve apostles for the twelve tribes of Israel, seventy disciples for the seventy nations of heathendom—teachers and preachers for the Jew first, and for the Gentile also. There was no resisting this. And then it might have been all true, for anything that was known or remembered to the contrary. The Christ really had been followed by a chosen few, who were with him in life and carried on his work after death—perhaps somewhere about twelve of them there might have been; and there had been many others, in relations to him, more or less direct, of spiritual affinity and discipleship—you could not be far wrong in taking these at somewhere about seventy. And it is curious that the evangelists give, in part, *different names* in their lists of the Twelve: they did not quite well know who the twelve were, but they were quite sure that there were twelve. I think all this, however unimportant in itself, casts light upon the structure and growth of an evangelic mythus. The ‘Follow me’ and the ‘leaving all straightway,’ the mystical Twelve and the mystical Seventy—just mean that Jesus had disciples, in different degrees of personal and spiritual nearness to him, some of whom had once been fishermen, and one a publican.

We now proceed to the Miracles of Christ's Public Life. To this large and complex question Dr. Strauss devotes fourteen sections of close analytical disquisition; classifying the miracles according to their leading characteristics, taking each class separately, and dealing in detail with its most remarkable specimens. I shall make no attempt to follow him through all the minutiae of his inquiry; but shall simply endeavour to

put you in possession of his general view respecting the gospel miracles, with so much of detailed illustration as this may require.

The books called *Gospels* of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—those documents of unknown authorship and date, of which we know little more than that we find them, in distinctly recognised and established literary being, during the latter half of the second century—describe Jesus of Nazareth as a Miraculous Man; the subject of miracles, and the worker of miracles; born miraculously, under the auspices of the angel Gabriel, with a miraculous star shining on his infant head; thrice declared Son of God, by voice from the sky; tempted of the devil in a wilderness after a six-weeks' fast; turning water into wine, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, giving sight to the blind and strength to the crippled, by a word or a touch; exorcising demons out of men, and sending them into swine; feeding famished multitudes with a few loaves and fishes; walking on the surface of water; giving fishermen miraculous draughts of fishes—fishes even with money in their mouths; blasting a fig-tree with perpetual barrenness; raising the dead; shone upon with preternatural brightness, and holding converse with Moses and Elijah; reappearing after death; and finally vanishing in a cloud, and ascending into heaven.

This is the account which the gospels give of Jesus of Nazareth. And on this, two questions arise; or rather, one great question arises, with another behind it ready to arise in the event of a negative being put upon the former. First, is all this mass of prodigy historically, objectively true? And secondly, if untrue, what is the source and nature of its untruth? is it mistake (the notion of fraud being out of the question), or is it poetry? The first of these questions is that at issue between the supernaturalists and the anti-supernaturalists: the second is the question at issue between the two schools of anti-supernaturalism—the *rationalist* and the *critical*, as they call them in Germany; the one represented by Professor Paulus, and the other by Dr. Strauss.

The first question about the miracles of the Christian bio-

graphies is, Are they real? Do they belong to the category of historical verities? Had these things ever a visible, tangible being in space and time? What evidence have we for them? Really, they are not to be taken up too easily. Faith is not to go quite as a matter of course. All this supernaturalism is an enormous demand, when one thinks of it, upon the believing power: if we do not so feel it, it can only be because we are used to it. We do not believe any other miracles than these. All religions have miracles; all ancient histories (all modern histories too, till printing came in) have miracles: but we do not believe them. The old world is all miracle together: we believe not one particle of it. Herodotus relates miracles: we do not believe them. Livy relates miracles: we do not believe them. Tacitus relates miracles: we do not believe them. All early history—Greek, Roman, Hindoo, Egyptian, Gothic, Celtic—is charged with miracles: we do not believe them. The old Hebrew history is full of miracles, beginning with talking serpents and charmed trees: we do not more than half believe these, Hebrew though they are. The early Christian church, and the church of the middle ages, and the modern church of the Catholic world, are all full of miracles: we believe not one iota of the whole. And why not? Why, because all our experience is against miracles; while our experience is not against the tendency of mind, at a certain point of its progress, to believe miracles and make miracles. We reject all these things as a matter of course; without taking the trouble even to look at them; with a clear, quiet confidence exactly proportioned to the extent and depth of our knowledge. We cannot help this unbelief; our experience and knowledge legitimate it—force it upon us. Every step we take in science is a step away from supernaturalism. The more we see of the wonderful world we live in, the more we see that it is a world of Law. The belief in miracle is itself a thing of law; rises at certain points of mental progress, and declines at certain other points of mental progress—the one as regularly as the other. To ignorance, the world is all miracle: to knowledge, the world is all law. Philosophy is built upon law. The physical world is a world

of law, and so we have a physical philosophy: the moral world is a world of law, and so we have a moral philosophy. Reason demands uniformity in the legislation of Providence; and Providence, so far as we can see—the more conspicuously the further we see—responds to the demand. ‘As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end’—is the programme of the world of our knowledge, all nature answering in one everlasting Amen.

It is a hard thing to believe in miracles, unless it be in some particular miracles which one has always been used to believe in. I say nothing of *impossibility* in such a matter; we do not very clearly know what impossibility is: but improbability, unlikelihood, unlikeness to all that we see and know, contradiction to laws that have all the appearance of immutability—this is a thing we can both understand and feel. On the whole, we may say of a miracle, that it needs an extraordinary distinctness and fulness of evidence to put us in a condition even to suspend our opinion about it. And any belief, which any quantity or quality of evidence may induce, will still be of a somewhat provisional character. We believe *in the meantime*; but let any one shew us a flaw in the evidence, and the mind instantly rebounds, as from a constrained and artificial posture, back to the only faith that needs no evidence—the faith in nature, and in laws of nature which, like their Author, are without variableness or shadow of turning.

It needs evidence to make a miracle credible; evidence of a singularly definite and stringent sort. Now, what evidence have we for the miracles of the gospel histories? (for the present I except the Resurrection, which will require to be considered apart.) Who vouches for the walking on the water, the healing of the sick, the raising of the dead? Who are they that speak to us across the chasms of centuries, asking us to believe that the physical and organic laws of nature were not laws in their time? *We do not quite know who they are.* Actually, we do not know; and the learned cannot tell us. The evidence is anonymous; the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John being prefixed to our records we know not

by whom, or on what authority. And the internal character of these books is as questionable as the external circumstance of their authorship. They are of a very mixed nature. They have very much the look of being compilations; made up of heterogeneous materials, taken partly from written documents, partly from second or third-hand traditions—traditions from different localities, of different dates, sometimes even of antagonistic theological bearings—all mixed confusedly together, in a confusion out of which it is a regular branch of theological science (and none of the easiest) to make something like harmony. These books of the four gospels have beauties rich and rare: but historical clearness and congruity—all that makes matter-of-fact reliableness—are not among those beauties. They do not look as if they came from men favourably posited for giving facts, and intelligently scrupulous about giving only facts. Take them singly, or take them together—and they strike one as loosely written. Two of them are prefaced with stories of an utterly preposterous and incredible character, enough to put the mind in a state of scepticism about all that follows; another (Mark's) is distinguished by a pervading tone of embellishment and exaggeration; a fourth is tinctured, from one end to the other, with the opinions and phraseology of a particular theological school—gives chapter after chapter of discourses as Christ's, which it is morally impossible that the Christ of the other gospels ever should have uttered: and all of them, taken together, exhibit discrepancies and anachronisms that perplex and dash the maturest counsels of the evangelic harmonist.

Then, what would the gospel miracles prove, if real? It is worth while asking that. Why, they would prove *that* to be true which we have evidence in our own hands for proving to be not true. They would prove that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy: and Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy. The gospel miracles say, if they say anything, that the mission of Jesus was a realisation of certain Old-Testament predictions: and the mission of Jesus was not a realisation of those Old-Testament predictions. That is all. It is a simple question of fact.

Look at the predictions, and look at the realities—and say if they agree together. Jeremiah predicted the perpetuation of the levitical priesthood and the throne of David: it never came to pass: the levitical priesthood and the throne of David are sunk deep down, ages ago, in the bottomless pit of nothing. Ezekiel predicted a new David, king and shepherd of all Israel—the ten tribes and the two tribes reunited, and dwelling together as one people in the land upon the mountains of Israel: it never came to pass: the ten tribes are gone no man knows where; and the two tribes are, some of them, over here in London. Isaiah predicted a new Age of Gold, new heavens and a new earth, an Eden-like peace of nature with herself and her children, a millennium of knowledge, love and joy: it never came to pass: we are still waiting for our golden age as a just possible thing in the far future. No part of all this goodly prophetic vision is realised yet. Men thought it was coming true in the Christ and his kingdom: but it did not come true; the throne of David was not restored, the house of Israel was not gathered together, but scattered abroad—it all broke to pieces. There are these two things—the expectations of Hebrew seers and the realities of the life of Jesus—they do not agree. They will not join on at all. There is a great gulf fixed between them; with no possible passing from the one to the other, except by the bridge of spiritualising, accommodating interpretation, of the sort of which we have so many specimens in Paul's epistles. Christ's own predictions did not come true either. He said (if we may trust his reporters), 'The sign of the Son of Man shall appear in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory; and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other;'—Christ prophesied this, with a 'Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled:' well, that generation has passed away, and many more since that, and these things are not fulfilled, not any one of them. To square prediction with fulfil-

ment, we must spiritualise new meanings into Christ's prophecies, as Paul did into Isaiah's prophecies. Now who can think of miracles here? The Christian miracles would be the pledge, the unredeemed pledge of Providence, for the coming true of prophecies about the throne of David and the advent of the Son of Man, which prophecies did not come true. We should have to suppose that Providence said supernaturally what it has unsaid naturally, authenticated a human mistake by a divine miracle.

Such are the general bearings of the anti-supernaturalist argument, in its relation to the Christian miracles. That argument resolves itself into three elements:—first, the antecedent improbability attaching to the notion of miracle at all; secondly, the loose, uncertain character of the evidence for the New-Testament miracles; and thirdly, the false position in which these miracles would place us, in regard to matters of historical fact and literary interpretation. This is the essence of the argument against the Christian miracles.

Many things are urged in defence of these miracles. It is said that miracle was necessary, just at that point of the world's progress, to carry on the moral education of humanity; to give men a faith, a religion; that nature had failed, had been tried and found wanting; and that it was worthy of Providence to interpose with a new and more impressive mode of teaching. Very well; but now miracles have failed too, for all who do not believe them; that is, for the majority of cultivated men throughout Christendom. We ought by this rule to have new miracles, miracles again and again, to verify the old ones, and vindicate Providence from the charge of having interposed in vain—specially exerted itself, actually gone out of its way, only to encounter the humiliation of defeat. If ever there was an age in which men wanted a faith, surely that age is now:—yet no miracles come to give the faith; none but the one eternal miracle of the heavens and the earth, life and the world—silent, serene, majestic—day unto day uttering speech, and night unto night shewing knowledge. We get no other miracle than this: yet I am

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sure we want it much more than ever the Jews did. On the whole, it does not seem to be a rule with Providence to give miracles when nature fails : the argument goes on the assumption that Providence must have seen it right to do, two thousand years ago, what, in point of fact, Providence does not do now, in a case of analogous and equal urgency.

It is said that we must believe the New-Testament miracles because they account for Christianity, which otherwise, it is alleged, remains unaccounted for. 'Christianity *is*—a vast fact in history; how came it to be? It had a cause; what was that cause? The four gospels tell us; they assign a cause, and one of admitted and unquestioned adequacy; they account for Christianity: reject them and their account, and where is your substitute? Deny the gospel miracles—and how do you explain the birth and growth of the Gospel?' The fuller consideration of this plea for supernaturalism must be reserved till after we have examined the chief of the gospel miracles—the resurrection of Jesus. It may be enough, for the present, just to note that the supernaturalism of the New Testament (to say nothing of its inherent incredibility) makes a greater difficulty than it takes away, with reference even to this very matter of accounting for Christianity. The miracles of the four gospels certainly do give a perfectly adequate account of how it was possible that Jesus of Nazareth should be received as Messiah by a portion of his countrymen, and leave a religion behind him, to endure and grow after his death. But then (not to say that this is only giving a greater difficulty in exchange for a less—the merely unaccountable is less oppressive to the understanding than the miraculous) this very solution becomes itself one of the data in a new problem of far more formidable difficulty. Believe the miracles—and it is true that we can easily understand Jesus' impressing the minds of some scores or hundreds of the Jewish nation with the conviction of his Messiahship: but then how, believing the miracles, do we understand and account for his being rejected by that nation, as a nation? The miracles make it quite intelligible how a crucified Jew should found the Christian church:—but then *how, supposing the miracles, did the*

Jew ever come to be crucified? What are we to do with *this* miracle—that Jesus did such things as those told of him by the fourth evangelist—wrought wonder after wonder in Jerusalem itself, at the great feasts, in the sight or within the immediate knowledge of thousands and thousands of the people from all parts of the country, gave sight to a man born blind, strength to a man thirty-eight years crippled, life to the dead and buried—all this in and about Jerusalem, all perfectly well known to the people and their rulers—and yet this people, at the instigation of these rulers, turned round and cried ‘Crucify him:’ how shall we explain this? The belief of the few, without miracles, may argue what we call enthusiasm: but the unbelief, the disbelieving rejection, hate and scorn of the many, with the miracles, would be sheer idiocy. This is the miracle to be accounted for. And the evangelist does account for it, in his way. He is very frank about it. He honestly tells us that this Jewish unbelief was a miracle; the hardest sort of miracle—a miracle upon the mind, a penal miracle, a miracle wrought to fulfil a prophecy. He evidently feels the difficulty to be a desperate one, and desperate is the solution:—‘Though Jesus had done so many miracles before them, YET they believed not on him, that the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Therefore they COULD NOT believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.’ However we may demur to the philosophy and morality of this singular speculation, still, granting the evangelist’s premises, I think the conclusion legitimate enough. It was a miracle, this popular rejection and disownment of the prophet who ‘had done so many miracles before them’—it was a miracle, if it ever happened.

The truth is, there is no accounting for Christianity in a precise mechanico-logical way. We cannot so account for any great revolution; for any great mind. Genius is ever a mystery even to itself. We cannot account for Christianity:

—only we may say, in general, that all other great moral revolutions have been the work not of miracles but of ideas, not of physical prodigies but of moral impulses. It is sheer materialism, and of a rather gross sort, to hold that a believing age and people cannot grow a new religion without miracles. They can grow the religion and the miracles too, as many as are needed. A moral idea or truth never died out of the world yet, for want of a miracle: it always finds or makes all the conditions, external and internal, needed for its effectual self-assertion.

The German Anti-supernaturalists (those of them who reject the idea of fraud) are divided into two great schools, which view the miracles in two quite opposite ways. The older Rationalists, maintaining the strictly historical character of the New-Testament records, explain away the supernaturalism of them, by resolving it, sometimes into the erroneous philosophy and excited imaginations of the original witnesses of the facts, sometimes into the perverseness of modern interpretation, that will persist in seeing miracles where none were intended or supposed by the historian. This class of divines (of whom, as regards the gospel histories, Professor Paulus is the most distinguished representative) regard Jesus very much as a kind of physician, healing disease by natural appliances—in the case of the demoniacs, by happily adapting himself to the peculiar mania of the patient. Some of their expositions are remarkably ingenious. Thus, when Jesus asked the blind man of Bethsaida, after an initial stage of the healing operation, ‘if he saw any thing,’ it was the question of an oculist, reading the diagnostics of ocular disease. When he made clay with spittle, and anointed the blind man’s eyes, he used a particular species of powder possessing sanative virtues. When he said to the man with the withered hand, ‘Stretch out thy hand,’ it was that he might inspect it, and ascertain the nature and requisite treatment of the infirmity in question. When he said to the paralytic of the pool of Bethesda, ‘Take up thy bed and walk,’ he rebuked and exposed an infamous impostor of thirty-eight years’ practice, who had all that time

been living upon the too credulous benevolence of the good people of Jerusalem. When he said, 'I must work while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work,' he meant that the operation he was about to perform was a delicate one, and required a strong light. When he said of Lazarus, 'This sickness is not unto death,' he expressed an opinion founded upon information communicated by the messenger from Bethany; and when, on the opening of the tomb, he exclaimed, 'Father, I thank thee,' it was in the joy of discovering that his best anticipations were realised; that Lazarus was only sleeping, as he had conjectured. The theological literature of this school is rich in dexterous conjecture. The rebuke of the timid disciples in the tempest, 'O ye of little faith,' was simply an intimation that their fears were exaggerated—the heavens were not so threatening as they fancied. The walking on the sea is a mistranslation; Jesus walked on the land, *by* the sea. The money in the fish's mouth is figurative; money would be found in the fish's mouth by taking it to market. The changing the water into wine was a mirthful device of friendship;—misunderstood by the Evangelist, in consequence of his having participated in the festive hospitalities of the occasion to an extent unfavourable to accuracy of observation. And the Transfiguration was nothing more than a dream of Peter's, suggested by a previous discourse with his Master about Moses and Elias; from which dream Peter happened to awake just at the critical moment when two unknown individuals happened to be conversing with Jesus—the three shone upon strongly by a sudden flash of lightning, the thunder accompanying which was the voice of divine approval.

There are none of these ingenuities in Dr. Strauss's book. As he does not recognise the assumption on which they all proceed, of the historical character of the gospels, he is relieved from the necessity of these awkward and elaborate simplifications. The general principle which he takes may be stated thus :—*given the Messiahship of Jesus, the miracles would follow of course*: legends in glorification of God's Christ would spring up in this place and that place, out of the teeming soil of the Hebrew heart and imagination—a plentiful

harvest there would be of them after the seed had been a little while in the ground—and, by the time all these came to be collected and arranged, and worked up in their connexions with prophecy and with earlier legends and traditions, they would naturally and inevitably make some such books as our four gospels. The miracles would follow of course from the Messiahship: the particular kinds of miracles would follow of course. It was all pre-arranged and prefigured. ‘Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing’—this was the prophetic type of the Messianic times. It was as clear that the Messiah must have wrought miracles—particular sorts of miracles—as that he must have been born at Bethlehem, of the root and offspring of David. He was the greatest of the prophets, greater than all the other prophets together; all the scattered glories of Old-Testament supernaturalism met and centred on the head of the Son of God.

Thus, like Moses, the Christ would feed his people miraculously; feed them in a desert: and the sceptical murmurings of the desert would be repeated, as of old, and rebuked, as of old, by the splendour and fulness of the divine bounty. There was nothing new even in the *modus* of the miracle—the supernatural growing of food in its prepared state: the widow’s barrel of meal and cruse of oil had grown under the blessing of Elijah. Elisha, again, had fed a hundred men with twenty barley loaves: and, though his servitor sceptically objected, ‘What! shall I set these before a hundred men?’ yet the man of God replied, ‘Give the people, that they may eat; for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof’—and so ‘they did eat, and did leave fragments thereof’ (how many basketfuls we are not told), ‘according to the word of the Lord.’ It was all in precedent already, point by point: only the difference between twenty loaves for one hundred men, and five loaves for five thousand men, measured the difference between the Old-Testament Prophet and the Messiah of God.

The opening of the eyes of the blind was another element

of the Messianic idea. Elisha opened men's eyes miraculously: and could the Christ do less? Elisha inflicted blindness by miracle: the Christ must heal blindness by miracle. Elisha sent Naaman to wash in Jordan: the Christ sent his patient to wash in the pool of Siloam, which is, by interpretation, *Sent*. How perfectly natural! There was grammatical propriety in it, as well as mythical fitness.

The Messiah must have healed lepers too. Elisha healed a leper. Moses inflicted leprosy miraculously. The Christ could not, indeed, do that: Christian legend loved not the penal miracle, for *he* came not to destroy men's lives but to save. Even a Moses or an Elijah was not to be followed here; his wonders must be all in the order of beneficence. The Lawgiver made lepers by miracle: of course the Messiah healed lepers by miracle.

The Messiah would have power over the elements. The great transubstantiation-miracle of the Emancipator was not to be forgotten: only the new wonder must be as much better than the old, as the new Covenant was diviner than the old. Moses changed water into blood: what could the Christ do less, than change water into wine that maketh glad the heart of man? In old time, God had rebuked the sea by the mouth of his servant Moses. The very phrase was familiar to the Hebrew ear; the Psalms and the Prophets both have it—'He rebuked the Red Sea, and it was dried up.' And so the Messiah must rebuke the winds and the waves, and make a great calm: he would not have been that manner of man which a Messiah must have been, if the winds and the waves had not obeyed him. Like Moses, he would walk, if not in the sea, on the sea. That was quite necessary; for Elijah and Elisha walked dry-shod through Jordan. And, as the ancient man of God held in abeyance the law of gravitation, and made iron swim, the Messiah must reveal his higher divinity of person, his fellowship with the skies, by exercising the prerogative of Him who 'alone treadeth on the waves of the sea.'

The Messiah came to destroy the works of the devil. And where should he assail the devil, but in his stronghold, his tower of pride—in the souls and bodies of the possessed?

This was the grand test of the prophet and wonder-worker: here the spirit of mythus would summon all its resources, and do its very best. How naturally it reads, again and again—*The demons knew him!* The multitude might doubt, Pharisees might cavil, and Sadducees deride—but there was no mistake here; the demons knew him, who he was, the Holy One of God. It was invaluable testimony; at once disinterested and unerring. They ask him, in deprecating terror, ‘Ah! Jesus of Nazareth, art thou come to destroy us? Jesus, son of God, art thou come hither to torment us before the time?’ They dreaded that Holy One of God, and besought him ‘that he would not send them into the abyss.’ This casting out of demons was the grand proof-miracle of all. And accordingly there must be no mistake about it; not a loophole left for cavil to lay hold by. He must shew that the demons were really gone. Josephus tells us of a certain Jewish exorcist who, by magic charm learned from the great Enchanter of the East, king Solomon, was particularly successful with the demons: and it was this man’s way, in order to preclude all doubt, and make his miracle visible to the naked eye and level with the meanest capacity, to have a jar of water at hand, into which he drove the expelled demon; the agitation of the fluid giving ocular demonstration of the else invisible transit of the unclean spirit. But what was this to the *herd of swine*? There was proof positive; a whole legion of them driven down violently into the sea; Satan falling visibly like lightning. The evangelists seem to have made much of these miracles. Three of them give us the story of the swine: only one seems to have known of the raising of Lazarus.

And the Christ must have raised the dead. Nothing was clearer than this. No element of the Messianic idea was more fixed and rooted. They had expected the resurrection of the patriarchs at the Messiah’s coming: but now that was put off, until his return from the skies. His first visit was not properly his coming—it was but preparatory for the real coming; and the great wonder of all was reserved till then. Yet even, the brief preparatory visitation must have given a pledge and

earnest of that which was to be.* Elijah raised the dead; raised a child, a 'widow's son,' and 'delivered him unto his mother.' Elisha raised the dead: yet not by life-giving word—it was a work of prayer, and pains-taking, and laborious manipulation; the Prophet 'lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon the child's mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands, and he stretched himself upon the child'—and even with all that it was a work of time. Not so the Christ: he had life in himself. His simple, grand 'Arise! come forth' was summons enough to the four-days' dead and buried; and, if he did pray, it was not in obedience to any need of his own wonder-working nature, but for their sakes who stood by.

And so on all through the gospel miracles. They were the fulfilment of ancient prophecies, the realisation of ancient ideas, the antitype to ancient and venerated types. They were all there, in the Hebrew mind, before ever any Messiah came. There could be no possible difficulty or doubt in the matter. Jesus was the Messiah—they knew that: well then, knowing that, they also knew what he ought to have done as Messiah, what he must have done, what of course he had done; it only remained to fill in the blanks of name, date, and place. And these would not always be in blank. The spirit of legend would have many and many a nucleus of fact to work upon. *Some* miracles, miraculous-looking incidents, there must have been, in an age like that and among a people like that. Nothing but one prolonged mental miracle could have hindered miracles from taking place almost daily, in the presence of one who was believed or imagined to be the Christ of God. No doubt, many demons were cast out: probably, paralytics not a few were wholly or partially restored, as by miraculous

* To this we may add—the consideration is applicable to the Christian miracles generally—that, as the Second Coming went further and further off into the remoteness of uncertainty, the church would make more and more of the First Coming; would turn to the past rather than the future, and incorporate the Messianic idea *there*, with growing distinctness and fulness. See a suggestion to this effect in Schnitzer's Review of the German translation of Mr. Hennell's "Inquiry;" *Allgemeine Litteratur-Zeitung*, May 1840.

voice or touch: possibly, some few all-but dead may have lived again upon the divine 'I say unto thee, Arise.' Perhaps Jesus himself was more than once startled by the discovery of powers which he had scarcely been aware that he possessed. There must have been facts and rumours in abundance, for legend to cling around and grow to; and how naturally would these floating recollections, caught up by every breath of wondering and loving reverence, transmitted from mouth to mouth and from heart to heart, associated with the Messianic idea, and reinforced by Old-Testament types and prophecies—how naturally would they (only give them a little time—thirty, forty, or fifty years) work up into some such Christian mythology as we now have!

It was most natural that legends—fair, benign and graceful legends, impregnated, the most of them, with the divine life of his own moral being—should cluster thickly around the name and history of the Man of Nazareth. There was something more at work in this than the mere spirit of Hebrew parallelism and mythus: there was the eternal heart of humanity, with its Hero-worship—the best it had to give—to Israel's Messiah and the world's Saviour. There is more than mythical fitness—there is moral truth, in these wondrous, beautiful creations. They are not frauds, inventions, artificial manufactured things, or they would have worn out long before now—but growths of the Hebrew and the human heart; natural growths; the poetry that ever grows around a great divine reality, concealing much but suggesting more, obscuring somewhat of the mere distinctness of outline and detail, but enhancing the general moral expressiveness of the whole. Nature is always right: all her growths are beautiful and good in their season.

Wonderful books these gospels are! What an energy and fulness of life is in them still! With all their blunders, extravagances, contradictions, anachronisms, and whatever else of that sort the critical intellect may find in them—how they live with it all; live with a power no other books have, in all this world; live in the life of that marvellous Mind which

breathes through them all, softening and harmonising, giving a sort of naturalness to impossibility itself! Well might the Evangelist say, 'In him is life, and the life is the light of men.' Whatever we make of the four gospels, this is our one Gospel; true, eternally true, plenarily inspired, breathing all over of the Infinite Truth and Love; the gospel of Christ's moral being, and all which that being reveals; the gospel of humanity's rights, duties, capabilities and destination. It is still a light for men. It does not matter much what we do with miracles and such things, so long as we keep true to that truth which is truth still (miracles or no miracles), which not all the miracles of forty gospels could make truer than it is already. The faith, the religion, the Idea of the Christ—Son of God and Brother of Man, the Divine in the Human, God with us and in us—this is truth for us all, truth to be loved and lived.

LECTURE V.

DR. STRAUSS, in his Chapter on the Transfiguration, quotes the following curious passage from a rabbinical book against Christianity:—

“ Our master Moses, of happy memory, (though he was a mere man) when God had been talking with him face to face, came down from the Mount with his face shining, so that the children of Israel feared to approach him. How much more ought this to hold of a divine person! How much more ought the face of Jesus to shed light and glory from one end of the earth to the other! Yet he was not endowed with any splendour, but was quite like the rest of mortals. Therefore it is clear that we ought not to believe in him.”

Very clear indeed, if you reason it from this end. The syllogism is perfect. ‘The Messiah ought to be shone upon, like Moses, with a preternatural brightness: Jesus of Nazareth was not so shone upon: therefore Jesus of Nazareth was not the Messiah.’ Quite irrefragable logic. ‘The Messiah could not be inferior to the Lawgiver in this matter of the shining face: Jesus was inferior to the Lawgiver in this matter: therefore Jesus was not the Messiah:’—a very good syllogism, if you begin at this end, and take your fixed point in the assumption *that the face of Jesus did not shine*. But suppose you take it the other way: syllogise in the reverse direction: take your fixed point in the assumption *that Jesus was the Messiah*—and then you may have, with as little trouble, a piece of equally irrefragable Christian logic. ‘Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah: the Messiah could not have been, in any thing, less honoured than the Lawgiver: therefore the face of Jesus must have been shone upon, like that of Moses, with preternatural brightness; with a brightness as far excelling that of Moses’ face, as the ministration of the

spirit, the glory of God in the face of Christ, was more glorious than the ministration of the letter.' This ought to have been; it must have been; it had been. The miracle of the Transfiguration was more than a fact: it was a logical and theological necessity.

There is no occasion, then, for thunder and lightning, dreams of Peter's, strange unknown men casually conversing with Jesus, and excited imaginations to take them for Moses and Elias: it was a much simpler business than that. The Transfiguration was all in Hebrew idea and type, and only waited for the right Messiah to come and actualise it. Nothing could be more straightforward. Moses was transfigured on a mountain: so was Christ. Moses had his chosen three with him—Aaron, Nadab and Abihu—when he went up to the mountain to worship: the Christ went up to the mountain to pray, with his chosen three—Peter, and James, and John. The skin of Moses' face shone with a brightness insufferable, and he veiled it: there was no veiling the brightness of Christ's face; his very raiment became 'white and glistening, white as the light.' It is mythus all through; every part of it is instinct with mythical fitness and significance. Moses and Elijah were there; the one fulfilling the prediction of Malachi that Elijah the prophet should come before the day of the Lord, the other realising a favourite rabbinical idea (Strauss evidences this by quotation) that, when Elijah came, Moses would come with him: there they were, the Lawgiver and the Reformer-Prophet, testifying, by their presence, to him who came fulfilling the law and the prophets and reforming upon both. And there were the Disciples, dull and drowsy, heavy with sleep, setting off the whole in the relief of contrast (the evangelic mythus loves such contrasts—so far were they, men of little faith as they were, beneath the transcendent elevation of his spirit, that now, in his highest glory, as later, in his deepest humiliation, they could not even keep awake); and over all was the bright Shekinah-cloud, with a voice from its excellent glory, saying, 'This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.'

This mythus of the Transfiguration can scarcely have been

of very early date. It was not the first solution of the great difficulty about *Elijah coming before the Christ*; a difficulty which seems to have pressed somewhat heavily upon the Hebrew-Christian mind, if we may judge from the pains bestowed upon its solution. We find in the gospel history traces of two quite different traditions, two distinct types of thought, in regard to this matter; both satisfying, though in diametrically opposite ways, the popular expectation, and fulfilling the prophetic announcement. It seems to have been an anxious point with the early church: it must be made quite clear. The first solution was, that John the Baptist was Elijah. He said, indeed, when the question was put to him by the deputation from the Pharisees, that he was not Elijah. However, he came in the spirit of Elijah; and that fulfilment of the prophecy must do, in default of a more literal and exact one: and so Jesus is made to say to the disciples, 'This is Elijah who was to come, if ye will receive it.' Yet still that was not quite satisfactory. It would be better if the real original Elijah had come, visibly and bodily; every one could receive that. Well, here he was, visibly and bodily, on the Mount of Transfiguration, fulfilling the prophecy to the very letter.

Now these two traditions, of the literal and the spiritual coming of Elijah, are mutually contradictory; they imply opposite notions of prophecy and of fact; they interpret and fulfil prophecy in two different ways. The reality of the one makes the other an awkward and absurd superfluity. They must have sprung up at different times, in different localities, under different influences:—yet 'Legend is loath to part with any thing that it has once gained,' and so they both came to live peaceably side by side, feeding together the faith of the church. It is curious how completely the contradiction was digested and assimilated, even at so early a period as that of the compilation of our gospels. We read in two of these that, immediately after the Transfiguration, the disciples asked Jesus, 'Why, then, say the Scribes that Elias must first come?'—to which he answered, 'Elias is come already;' adding an explanation from which they understood that he

spake to them of John the Baptist. Very extraordinary this—both the question and the answer. They had just that moment seen Elias, face to face, and yet they wonder what it can be that the scribes mean by saying that Elias must come: they had just that moment seen Elias come bodily, and yet their Master tells them that John the Baptist was the Elias who was to come, that in him Elias came figuratively. A brilliant miracle suggests the sceptical doubt which it was meant to anticipate and quell; and the solution of the doubt impliedly negatives the miracle. The rational and natural thing for them to say then was, ‘So, then, this is what the scribes mean by saying that Elias must first come;’ to which the obvious reply would be, ‘Yes, you see the scribes are right, they have said that Elias must come, and Elias is come.’ It is evident that such a question and answer as our books give in this place, never arose out of such a miracle. They owe their position in the record to a mere verbal association of ideas. The writers were on the subject of Elijah and his coming, and they thought it a good place to put down all they had heard about it, from whatever quarter; and both stories were by that time so old and familiar that they did not feel the contradiction. This is a significant phenomenon;—two contradictory traditions grouped together by a trivial, casual, verbal suggestion. I think it would take time to do this; time for the two traditions to grow, first separately, and then together, and for the feeling of incongruity to wear itself out by familiarity. The inference is obvious. The books which exhibit such characteristics are not in immediate contact with that Reality which is ever one and self-consistent.

The chapter on the Transfiguration closes our Author's view of the history of Christ's Public Life. From this we pass to the third and last great division of his book—“The History of the Suffering, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.” In endeavouring to appreciate the general scope and results of the criticism which Dr. Strauss applies to this part of the gospel records, we shall find it the simplest way, first, to advert to two or three points illustrative of the character of

those records and the relation in which they stand to historical fact,—and then to form the best opinion we can, taking one thing with another, as to the probable realities, mental and material, out of which they have grown, and of which, partially and indirectly, they are representative.

Few persons, I imagine, are at all aware of the exceedingly confused and unsatisfactory state of the gospel narratives, in reference to nearly every part of Christ's history, and to some of the very simplest questions connected with the development and progress of his public work. Suppose, for instance, we take up these books for information on such a point as this—when did Jesus first speak of his approaching death, and with what effect on the minds of those who heard him?—we soon find that we can get no clear, consistent answer. If we fix our date for this momentous crisis in the mind and life of Christ according to the first three evangelists (who put it just before the Transfiguration), we find things in other parts even of their gospels, still more distinctly in the fourth, which oblige us to shift it again; we find allusions to his fate, almost from the first, scarcely less intelligible than the more literal utterances of a later period. There is little or nothing, in the gospels, of that *marking of the epochs* of Christ's outer or inner life, which one looks for in a history. We have neither definiteness of transition, nor naturalness of gradation: the different parts run confusedly together: we find things in one connexion, which plainly belong to another: the anachronisms are most bewildering. In regard to this particular matter of Christ's predictions of his own fate, it is difficult to believe that he ever said much of what is attributed to him. The supposition that he did comes too strongly in collision with facts. Results are broadly against it; for, when the event came, it found the disciples quite unprepared: not a trace of the predictions in question, copious, emphatic and literal though they are, appears in their then state of mind. In fact, so aware are the evangelists of this, that they repeatedly subjoin to some plain, matter-of-fact disclosure of the catastrophe, 'The disciples understood not that saying.' We

have the sharpest moral contrasts of this kind—a miraculous depth and precision of insight on his part, with an equally miraculous dulness on their part; contrasts which suggest the suspicion that the utterances thus ascribed to Jesus belong to the class of *prophecies after the event*, designed to take off the edge of the reproach of the cross, by exhibiting that astounding and humbling catastrophe in connexion with the free-will and prescience of the divine Sufferer. There would be no miracle in that: the other way we should have two miracles, the one neutralising the use and power of the other. It would be one miracle, that Christ foreknew and foretold the time and place of his death, the mode, the agents, even the accessory circumstances of it: and it would be another miracle, that such foretelling, couched in the plainest literalities that language could supply, should have been utterly without effect upon any kind or degree of prejudiced dulness compatible with mental sanity.

This is a specimen of the species of incongruity and psychological impossibility with which these books of the gospels abound. In the midst, however, of confusion and error, we may sometimes detect the presence of a truth, though a disguised and metamorphosed truth. It is quite conceivable that a mind like Christ's, with such a mission and in such a moral and social atmosphere, should, long before the close of his mortal career, have seen, in a general way, how things were going; that he should have felt, with growing distinctness of presentiment, how it must all end sooner or later; and that he should have been enabled, by the fulness and power that were in him of that 'prophetic spirit' which, in varying measures, 'inspires the human soul of universal earth,' to pierce the cloud of his near future, and gain glimpses of that far future in which partial evil is transfigured into universal good. That text, for instance, of the 'grain of wheat dying,' and, through and after death, living a larger, higher life, 'bringing forth much fruit,' is probably an historically genuine utterance of the mind of Jesus: and perhaps that other strangely expounded declaration about 'destroying the temple and building it again,' (too unique and peculiar to be a mere evangelic

invention) may have had a similar original reference to the resurrection of his cause, his truth—the renovation by him of the old outworn economy of the Temple and the Law, the rebuilding of the whole fabric into a house of prayer for all people. This is conceivable enough: and it is equally conceivable that these and other such sayings of Christ's, living in the traditions, and interpreted by the ideas of the church, should gradually take a more specific form and convey a distincter meaning, general bodings be rendered into minute predictions, the victory of scorned and persecuted truth literalised and materialised into the bodily resurrection of him who was the Truth, and the whole made poetically vivid and impressive, by broadly drawn contrasts between the profound and piercing intuition of the Master and the impervious dullness of the Disciples.

The accounts of Judas's treason, and of Christ's predictions of that treason, are fraught with this sort of difficulty. Here, again, scepticism as to the historical character of the gospels is our only refuge from moral incongruity. The fourth evangelist ascribes to Jesus a minute, particular foreknowledge, from the beginning, of his betrayal by Judas; a foreknowledge which involves these monstrous anomalies—that Jesus entrusted the poor's-bag to one whom he knew to be a thief (questionable in point both of morality and economy), and promised one of the twelve thrones of Israel to a man whom he knew all the while to be a traitorous knave, a devil. Again, a double miracle; a miracle of foreknowledge, and a miracle of moral solecism: both of which are escaped by supposing—what needs no miracle—that the zeal of discipleship invented or imagined the foreknowledge. The inducement was a strong one. It helped to abate the offence of the cross (else grievously aggravated by the undiscerning selection of such an apostle as Judas), and it illustrated the divine prescience of the Christ, thus to exhibit not only the catastrophe itself, but even its worthless and base-souled agent, as unconsciously ministering to the Wisdom that knew what was in man.

All through these four gospels we are repeatedly made to

feel that we tread upon unhistorical ground. There is a something or other interposing, like a haze, between us and reality. Take such a question now as this: Christ's last supper with his disciples—was it the paschal supper, or was it not? One would think there could be no mistake here. It seems one of the simplest of historic dates. An eye-witness never could have mistaken or forgotten: tradition itself, one might expect, would have a retentive memory on such a point. But no! there is mistake or forgetfulness: tradition gives two contradictory versions of the matter. The first three evangelists say that this last supper of Christ's *was* the passover; they say it again and again, by express statement and pervading implication:—the fourth evangelist says, again and again, also by express statement and pervading implication, that it was *not* the passover, that the passover was not till the next day. What are we to do? This is not a casual, verbal discrepancy, to be got over by 'various readings' and 'blunders of transcribers,' or by hypotheses about sectarian diversities in the time of eating the passover, which might have led different evangelists to calculate their chronology from different points. The discrepancy lies deeper than this; it goes all through the pith and marrow of the narratives. The two accounts are altogether conceived differently; cast in different types. The one is pervaded by the paschal idea; exhibits the passover as a central object, suggesting thought and colouring phraseology: actually, Christ is described as instituting a kind of rite, founded on the passover and growing out of it, connecting paschal ideas and recollections with his own approaching fate. In the other we have nothing of all this; the only allusions to the passover at all mention it as a thing that very shortly was to be; as, when Jesus said to Judas, 'What thou doest do quickly,' he was supposed, by some of the auditors, to be instructing the treasurer of the little society to 'buy what things they had need of against the feast.' It really is most perplexing, how two separate and divergent traditions, of a matter which one would imagine it impossible either to mistake or forget, should have developed themselves so early and completely. It only shews how fast evangelic tradition did

grow, and how far it had got, by the time our gospels were compiled, from the original source and centre of verity.

Which of these two traditions is the true one, no man can tell; especially as there is, on each side, much of that mythical significance and beauty which we have so often already seen to be a standing substitute for fact in this department of historic composition. There was beauty, poetry, mythical fitness in making Christ's last supper the paschal supper, and so giving a basis of topical suggestion to that rite which associated the symbols of the old covenant with the ideas of the new covenant, the redemption of Israel by Moses with the redemption of the world by Christ:—and there was likewise a fine mythical fitness the other way, in timing the crucifixion on the day of the passover, making the Christ himself the Paschal Lamb whose sprinkled blood took away the sin of the world; a fitness the appreciation of which appears in the evangelist's singular way of applying that text from the levitical rubric—'a bone of it shall not be broken.' It is a quite unresolvable question, this about the Last Supper: the one only net product of the inquiry is, that our four gospels, some or all of them, are largely tintured with an element of unreality.

In the accounts these books give of the reappearances of Jesus after death, it does seem as if confusion, discrepancy and contradiction had done their perfect work. These parts of the gospels have ever been the perplexity of harmonists. There is no fixing the picture for two moments together: if you think you have got a clear *datum* of fact from one writer, another comes and shifts it away from you. The only things in which they all agree are, that Jesus did rise, on the morning of the third day, and that the first accounts of his being risen were brought by women. All beyond these is enveloped in obscurity; contradiction within contradiction; sometimes divergent types of a tradition evidently one in its origin; sometimes a confluence and commingling of two or more originally separate traditions; always confusion and incongruity. We have discrepancy not only in the minor details of the matter—such as the names and number of the women to whom

the risen Jesus first shewed himself, the hour and the circumstances of their approach to the tomb, the incidents at the tomb, the circumstances of the first interview, and other things of that kind, which seem almost too petty to dwell upon (yet which have their importance, as indicating either great carelessness about facts, or local and chronological remoteness from the facts—in any case unfitness for the historic function),—we have discrepancy, not in these alone, but in the great outline features of the narratives. Thus, there are two distinctly developed types of the tradition of the resurrection and after-death appearances of Jesus;—the one (seemingly the earlier) making Galilee the scene of those appearances, the other locating the whole in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, with not one word about Galilee. There is nothing in the whole matter more perplexing than this. According to the first two evangelists, Christ before his death, and also the angel on the morning of the resurrection, direct the disciples to go into Galilee, there to meet their Master; Galilee is made, by special previous appointment, the place of their meeting; though even here the accounts are not consistent with themselves, for, according to the same writers, Jesus does not actually go into Galilee until after seeing them first of all in Jerusalem. Then the fourth evangelist evidently knows nothing of this Galilee arrangement; while the third not only says nothing about the direction to go into Galilee, not only never takes the disciples into Galilee at all, but records an express command to them not to leave Jerusalem. Actually we have two contradictory orders given by Jesus in one day; a message by the angel that they were to go into Galilee, and a personal instruction from himself that they were to stay where they were, in Jerusalem.

And then the number, the mode, the circumstances of the several appearances are given in such a loose, confused way. Matthew locates the leave-taking interview in Galilee; Luke assigns it to Bethany. Mark (who seems to have thrown his materials together, just as they were, in absolute despair of reducing them to order and consistency) gives an interview, without date of time or place, mixed up partly with things which Luke and John describe as having happened at Jeru-

saalem at one time, and partly with other things that Matthew assigns to Galilee and another time. Luke, again, confounds together things which John gives separately. In one account, the Ascension is evidently meant to be timed on the same day with the Resurrection: in the later narrative of the same writer, a new light appears to have been obtained, and an interval of forty days is inserted between them. Then there are angels, too, seen now here, and now there; sometimes one, and sometimes two; seen by one person, and not seen by another person, at the same time and place:—and one never sees the use of these angels; they are not wanted; one angel only gives the women a message from Jesus, which is superseded directly afterwards by Jesus meeting the women and speaking to them himself; two angels only ask Mary Magdalene a question. There is so much, again, of startling physical incongruity in the manner of man which the risen Christ is supposed to be—corporeal and incorporeal at once, coming and going with miraculous suddenness, entering mysteriously through closed doors, appearing in different forms, at one time their eyes holden that they should not know him, and at another time their eyes opened so that they did know him (though Matthew says that, even of the Eleven, *some doubted to the very last*);—take it altogether, it is a most confused, entangled business; there is no getting rest for the sole of one's foot at any point of it. Call this 'Evidence!' evidence of 'eye-witnesses!' It is evidence of nothing but that of which we ourselves are eye-witnesses—that a whole world of tradition and legend is between us and the reality.

But we are not entitled to take leave of the subject thus easily. The resurrection of Jesus, does not, like the other miracles, stand upon the four gospels only. One thing is quite clear about it, which is in no way dependent upon these fragmentary, conflicting legends of unknown date and authorship, and which consequently is not affected by any doubts that affect them; and that is, that the Resurrection was believed in the earliest age of Christianity. The faith in the revival and reappearance of Jesus was, from the first, the faith of the Christian church. The mark of the second century is

upon many things in our gospels—but the Gospel of ‘Jesus and the Resurrection’ is quite certainly not a thing of the second century. We have documentary evidence of this in Paul’s indubitably genuine first Epistle to the Corinthians, from which it appears that this belief was the belief of the age: some were then living (Paul himself one of them) who believed that they had seen the risen Christ. Now this is evidence, so far as it goes. It is evidence, perhaps, of a too vague and general sort to be satisfactory. We feel that we must know more about it, before we can place very much reliance upon any thing that Paul believed he had seen. It may have been that the day Paul saw Jesus was when he was caught up into the third heaven (whether in the body or out of the body he never could ascertain), and heard unspeakable words in the unknown tongue of that locality. There is no saying how it was: still it is evidence of something; we stand here upon historical ground; we have got a clear reality; we know, as matter of history, that the belief of Christ’s reappearance after death was coeval with the birth-time of apostolic Christianity. The angels, the earthquake, the entering through closed doors, and the other parts of the evangelic tradition, do not enter into the case at all; they possess no historic character; we have nothing to do with accounting for them:—but here we have something actual to deal with; a fixed luminous point in the infinite haze; a great mental fact which must have had a previous history, which history one must desire, if possible, to ascertain; an effect for which we are, if we can, to assign a cause. The founders of the Christian church believed the resurrection; thought, many of them, that they had seen Christ after his death: the question is, How did they come to believe and think this?

Perhaps the first answer to this question that might occur to a thoughtful man, after a thorough loosening of early prepossessions, would be, ‘I really do not know; I cannot say how they came to believe and think this; they do not tell me, except through dubious, second-hand traditions which I cannot clearly trace to them; they do not tell me, and I cannot tell you; I do not know, have not the means of knowing, and

would rather, in all such cases, with the Philosopher of Utility, fast on ignorance than feed on error.' This is an obvious and quite legitimate answer to any such question; the best answer to give to a perverse and captious questioner. Still, the mind will not rest here, if it can possibly advance a step further. If to *know* be unattainable, one cannot help conjecturing and supposing. Here are certain mental phenomena; and one naturally feels about, however uncertainly, for some sort of clue to them—something that may assist one to figure them easily to the mind's eye, and link them in with the great world-sequence of cause and effect. It is often a wise thing to say, 'I don't know;' it does the mind good, clears out a deal of rubbish, and is a hopeful preliminary to being able to say, 'I think I do know:'—but still, having said it, reason returns in quest of probability and likelihood. If you do not know how it was, can you think how it may have been? What facts are there in history, what laws are there in mind, by whose collocation and mutual action you can work out the given problem with any fair and natural probability?

To those who deny or doubt the raising of a man from the dead, there are two alternatives open. Scepticism may apply itself, according as the special probabilities of the case suggest, either to the completeness of the death, or to the reality of the revival. In the case before us, the prevailing tendency of German anti-supernaturalism has been to the former alternative. And it is not surprising that it should. The direct evidence of Christ's death is not by any means irresistible. He remained upon the cross an unusually short time (six hours, or three hours, according to our choice of different accounts and modes of calculation), whereas crucifixion was a long death, mortal rather by tediousness and protraction of torture wearing out the powers of endurance, than by any direct assault upon the seat of life. It was a long, lingering death. There are instances (Josephus mentions one) of persons being taken down from the cross after the lapse of hours, and living afterwards. Then the piercing of the side with the spear, so confidently alleged as deciding the reality of Christ's death, is open to many questions, etymological and anatomical.

Altogether, it is not an indisputably attested fact that Jesus died on the cross, and we cannot wonder that scepticism has applied itself to this point first. Accordingly, most of the leading rationalists of Germany have taken this ground, of the non-reality of Christ's death; supposing that he was removed from the cross in a state of swoon (or syncope) which was mistaken for death, and that he afterwards revived, under the sanative influences of the spices of embalmment, and the cool air of the large rock-sepulchre.

This is not Dr. Strauss's view. He considers it, on the whole, more probable that Christ did really die; that Roman soldiers and executioners did not make a mistake in their work: of that, I imagine, it would be difficult to find a precedent in Josephus. And he applies himself accordingly to the problem of the Resurrection—the problem, namely, ‘Given the death of Jesus, to find the resurrection, without infringing on the laws of physical and moral being:’ in other words, account for the faith of the resurrection, without supposing the fact of the resurrection. His way of working this problem is remarkable chiefly for its simplicity; its economy, almost parsimony, in the assumption of premises. His theory is composed of very few elements: he postulates nothing in the shape of physical, external accident, but takes his point of departure in a moral idea, and works out from that by the laws of the human and the Hebrew mind.

In order to understand this subject, he says, we must first think ourselves into sympathy with the Disciples, at the period shortly after their Master's death. We must enter into their state of mind, realise their position. It was the position of men burdened and oppressed, to very suffocation, with the weight of a vast contradiction; labouring under a monstrous anomaly; the whole world of their ideas dislocated into a chaos. Jesus was the Christ: they knew that; at least they had known it:—and Jesus had died: they knew that too.

They had known their Master to be the Messiah. *How* they had known this, we cannot now tell, precisely and in detail: (only it was not necessarily by miracle, for men were ready to believe the Messiahship of John, who did no miracle).

We cannot so tell how Jesus himself had known it, and it were a fond and over-fine curiosity to try to theorise minutely on such a matter. It is a mystery, of every great mind, how it comes by its greatest ideas. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and we hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the spirit. The spirit of God in man works by law; but we cannot always, in our theories, reduce its workings to law. We cannot tell how it was, or when it was, that Jesus of Nazareth first felt the movings of that inspiration which is ever its own divinest commission: but he was so moved, inspired, commissioned—he knew that he was God's Messiah. And fishermen and publicans, some few, came to know it too. Again, we have no particular account that we can rely upon, how this was: only we know, in general, that faith inspires faith, conviction works conviction; whatever a true man believes, he is sure to find some other true men to believe with him. So it was with these Galileans. They knew Jesus of Nazareth to be God's Christ; they were sure of it; long intercourse with him had made it a conviction, a faith to live and die for. Well, now he was dead, and for the moment it was all over: the cross unsettled every thing: they were startled, confounded, absolutely stunned by the death of God's Christ. Death was no element of their Messianic idea. They could not make it out at all. They fled, affrighted and dismayed, back to their own Galilee: it was all over, that fair, bright vision—gone like a dream when one awaketh.

Yet this was not a state of mind to last. A cherished faith dies not thus. It was a tremendous revulsion, indeed, from the Throne on Zion to the Cross on Calvary: but the revulsion was more violent still, from the kingdom of heaven to the nets, the fishing and the seat of custom. This was worse than the other. No! it was not all over yet. To go back to Galilee was to go where every thing would speak to them of Jesus the Christ of God: his presence hovered around them every where, by its sea-side and on its mountain-tops; the very lilies breathed of Christ. To go back to Galilee was to resume the thread of thought, feeling and expectancy,

which that journey to Jerusalem had so fatally broken off; it was to live again, though sadly and dubiously, in the world of Messianic ideas. Here was a contradiction, an anomaly, reaching all through their being; an anomaly which must be solved, a contradiction which must be reconciled.

Yet how to reconcile it? They could not get rid of either of its elements. They could not disown the Messiahship of Jesus, without taking their very hearts to pieces: they could not forget that they had seen Jesus die. Well, then, there was only one way;—they must combine the two elements; they must believe the Death of the Christ a not impossible thing; they must receive the idea of death into their Messianic conception. So then! they might have been mistaken all along; perhaps this was the true Messianic idea, after all; perhaps the Scripture itself said so. Yes; so it did, now that they came to read with clear eye and open mind. There it was: Isaiah had written of a servant of God, a man of sorrows, whom it pleased the Lord to bruise, who was numbered with transgressors, who poured out his soul unto death, yet, after that, would prolong his days and see the pleasure of the Lord prosper in his hands. There was David's twenty-second Psalm too, to the very point: the scorn, the anguish, the piercing of the hands and the feet, the abandonment by God and man—all these only the prelude to victorious and rejoicing faith. David himself had suffered many things before entering into his glory; and how should it be otherwise with David's Son? It was a Scripture doctrine, rooted in history and growing up into prophecy, that suffering and humiliation must herald victory; and here was the doctrine realised once more in the facts of Providence. There it was: only they had never seen it till now, 'fools and slow of heart' that they were. But now, their eyes were opened, and their hearts burned within them. They saw it all. It was necessary that the Christ should suffer many things, and then enter into his glory; he would not else be the Christ; suffering was not in contradiction to the Messianic idea—it was an integral element of it.

And of course the Christ was not really dead. Death

could have no dominion over him. He was only gone away, and would come again. He was **RISEN**. He had entered into his glory; and would be with them, invisibly and in spirit, until the end of the age should bring him visibly and bodily in the glory of the Father, with the holy angels and the sound of a trumpet, restoring the kingdom to Israel, raising the dead and judging the world. They had not far to go now. There would come, next, *visions*—actual visions—of the Crucified and Risen, with the death-scars just visible on his hands and side, but a glory around his brow. He would oftentimes appear as if standing in the midst of them, though the closed doors gave no sign of his approach. He would appear in different forms, coming and going with mysterious suddenness. Women would be the first to see him; and then the loved few of the disciples, by ones and twos; and then others from the wider commonalty of the brethren:—and, though at first it would seem as an idle tale, and some would doubt long after others had believed, still the general movement of feeling and conviction would be in the direction of belief—and after a while it would come to be a settled point, and they would only marvel at their own little faith.

Such, in Dr. Strauss's view, was the probable psychological history of the Gospel of the Resurrection. This gospel was the reconciliation of a contradiction. It was the needed union of two elements of thought, neither of which could or would give way to the other—the faith that Jesus was the Christ, and the fact that Jesus had died on the cross. Neither of these would yield to the other: both were fixed points: the union of them was in the Resurrection and the Second Coming. There would be no great difficulty about the Resurrection, as such; the idea had a root in the popular pharisaic theology, of which the resurrection of the dead was a leading doctrine. The Crucifixion was the difficulty; the Cross was the stumbling-block. Once get past that—and the other was an almost imperceptible step in advance; and the church would soon have its completed Gospel, of a Christ who 'died and rose again, according to the Scriptures.'

This is our Author's account, then, of the growth of apos-

tolie Christianity. Its stages are sufficiently marked ; a want of the heart, an idea of the mind, a Scripture doctrine, a vision, and a fact. It would naturally take time before this Christianity was sufficiently matured to be preached in Jerusalem before priests and rulers. Our book of Acts, indeed, makes it a very short time—only the seven weeks that intervened between the Passover and the Pentecost. But I do not think that need perplex us much. The whole account of that Day of Pentecost seems largely tinged with the Mythical. The date, in particular, speaks for itself. The fitness was obvious, of timing the first announcement of the Gospel on the anniversary of the giving of the Law: the Lamb of God was slain at the Passover, and the gospel of Reconciliation must be dated from the Pentecost. It would be a work of time. Neither friends nor enemies would have a thought of examining the grave in the garden, until the time had passed by when that mode of demonstration could be productive of any clear result. It all went on in Galilee. There it was that the disciples could breathe freely, and re-unite the shattered world of their ideas: there it was (as would appear from the earlier tradition, which still leaves a trace of itself in our first two gospels) that they had their first visions: there it was that that faith silently grew into life and power, to which humanity owes its best, divinest gospel.

And, this faith once gained, we may think how it would react on all their recollections of the past; how the whole history of Jesus would shape itself more and more into poetry and mythus. It was all shone upon with a new light. Every thing about the Christ would be glorified, transfigured like his own glorious body: nothing but would suffer hourly ‘change into something rich and strange.’ All Hebrew history, prophecy, tradition would be full of Christ. They would see him every where. To use our Author’s true and beautiful simile—as the eye that has long gazed on the sun continues, for a while, to *see sun* in every thing, or on every thing, a solar halo glorifying, while obscuring, all that it looks at—so these men of Galilee would see their Christ in every thing. Types of Christ, prophecies of Christ, would meet the

gazing eye all through the divine book—in David, in Jonah, in Moses and Elias. Every text would have a new interpretation; every recollected fact would take a new shape and meaning; tradition would grow fast and freely, accumulating ever fresh and varied supernaturalism. The Cross, in particular, and all belonging to it, would be arrayed in a *nimbus* of glory and divinity. Jesus had foreseen his fate, foretold it, even in its minutest details; he had foreseen the avarice that betrayed, and the weakness that denied. He was above his fate, in power as in wisdom. It was his own free choice: he had power to lay down his life, and power to take it again: more than twelve legions of angels would have been ready to fight for him, had he only asked the Father. Then, at the cross itself there had been strange portents, signs and wonders. There was an earthquake, with rending of rocks—only a poetical earthquake, or it would have thrown down the crosses on Calvary. And the vail of the Temple was rent in twain, as the great High-Priest passed, once for all, into the unseen Holy of Holies—they knew that the vail of the Temple really was rent then, it was only translating the poetry of theology into history; (there is no occasion to help oneself here with the rationalist hypothesis that the vail was old and rotten—it *was* old and rotten, but not in that sense). And the graves were opened, and bodies of saints arose—it was then that the Christ descended into Hades, and Hades could not but be moved at his coming. And the sleep of the immortal Man was watched by an angel-guard of honour: and the waking-hour, at first perhaps floating in the dubiousness of metaphor, came, after a while, to be fixed and literalised for the morning of the third day, after the brief rest of one sabbath; for Hosea had said, ‘After two days will he revive us, on the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight,’ and, as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so must the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

And so it would go on, gaining fresh accretions day by day, till the time came for fixing the whole in writing. The intercourses of the risen Christ with his disciples and friends

would take a more and more definite shape. The first rude tradition, as we see it in Matthew and Mark, would be varied and enriched into the form it wears in Luke and John: the scene of the appearances would be gradually transferred from poor, despised Galilee, to the metropolis of Israel's pride and power; and the duration of them would be prolonged, as historical verisimilitude increasingly required, by a forty-days' interval (always the mystical *forty*). The growing requirements of heresy and unbelief would be met by growing definiteness and breadth of asseveration; heretics like the Docetæ crushingly refuted by demonstrative exhibitions of the corporeity of the immortal Man; the scepticism that believes only what it sees, rebuked by the benediction on the faith that 'has not seen, yet believes'—(there were probably *many Thomases* when the fourth evangelist wrote); and the whole would be finally crowned by the visible Ascension into a visible heaven—the fire-chariot of the Prophet of old exchanged for the shekinah-cloud that better suited the meek majesty of the Son of God—angels in white raiment closing, on the Mount of Olives, that sacred drama which Gabriel had opened in the Temple of the Lord, on the right side of the altar of incense.

In this theory of the history of the apostolic Gospel of the Resurrection, we are perhaps as near to the real, simple truth as the nature of the case allows of our going. At all events it has some clear merits. It is not a mechanical theory. It postulates not physical, external accidents, falling just on the happy moment that theory has need of them—but moral ideas working by moral laws, by the laws of the common human heart, modified only by the idiosyncrasies of the Hebrew heart. It is not a complicated theory, nor an arbitrary one. Nothing is assumed as a cause, a moving power, which did not certainly exist then and there: the only room left for error is in the estimate taken of the probable or possible working of known causes and spiritual forces. It is not an ignoble theory. Neither trick nor chance enters into its structure. As a matter of moral taste and feeling, I think we may say that

it is not unworthy of the subject. There is no violation of moral harmony in this genealogy of the Christian gospel: it exhibits faith growing out of faith, ideas developing themselves from ideas, and then actualising themselves objectively. Altogether, it seems to me, considering how dense a veil of conflicting and incredible legend is now between us and the fact, as probable an account as we are likely to attain of the growth of this gospel of Jesus and the Resurrection, and of the structure of those records in which it is enshrined.

One thing is clear, whatever else may be obscure:—great moral ideas, spiritual convictions are real things; are living, enduring things. They have a Providence with them. Once here, they are here for ever—a good seed sown in a not utterly and hopelessly bad soil. This is clear. It may be a mystery of mysteries, which we cannot pierce our way through, but only imperfectly guess at—whether, and when, and how the literal, personal Christ rose from his bed in the Arimathean's garden: but one thing is clear, without any mystery at all—the moral, the spiritual Christ is risen, is risen indeed. Whether by law or by miracle, whether by mental process or by physical prodigy—is, after all, but a secondary question. Different minds will answer it differently, and perhaps it is well they should: either way, there is food for the heart to live upon. If the one seems to give a new distinctness and tangibleness, the other gives largeness, breadth and depth to one's faith in God and man. If miracle did it, then it is our most vivid illustration—if law did it, then it is more than illustration, it is actual proof and warranty—of that greatest of gospels, that Moral Truth has God and nature on its side. This dies not: it cannot be killed, though all the world take counsel against it. Crucify it, if you will: it rises again, after the brief sleep of a seeming death; rises, to renew the conflict with principalities and powers of evil; rises, with power to go on from victory to victory in the great controversy of God; rises to the heaven whence it came, there to shine as the sun for ever. It has life in itself. The Christ may die—but the Gospel lives. Priests and rulers may practise, all-too successfully, upon the slave-passions of a slave-

ignorance; brute force may make holy, or unholy, alliance with spiritual wickedness; heaven itself may seem to go into mourning, while humanity cries aloud, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’—but wait awhile: God never forsakes humanity. The world’s greatest salvation was wrought out when darkness was over all the earth; the rending of the rocks was the opening of the graves; the world’s darkest hour rent the vail of Jerusalem’s Temple, and opened the Holy of Holies to the worshippers of the Outer Court. Truth can very well bear to be crucified, dead and buried: she always rises again, on or about the third day.

LECTURE VI.

I SUPPOSE the advocates of supernaturalism never feel themselves upon surer ground, than when they call upon the deniers or doubters of miracle to *account for Christianity upon natural principles*. It is a favourite line of argument with them; especially with the more reasoning and thoughtful of them. They ask us for a history of the Origin of Christianity, a possible or probable solution of the problem of its birth and growth. ‘Explain it,’ they say; ‘shew how it came to be; make out your case: here Christianity is—an effect which must have had a cause adequate to its production; it must have a previous history belonging to it: what cause do you assign? how do you read, or write, the early Christian history? Our gospels give you the history desiderated; the miracles of those gospels furnish the sufficient cause which philosophy seeks: what have you, who reject the gospels and their miracles, to put in their place? In particular, there is the Resurrection of Christ—the essence of apostolic Christianity, the rock on which the church was built, the root from which the church grew: what was the church built upon, what did the church grow from, if this be denied or doubted?’

In a former Lecture I adverted to this supernaturalist argument, adducing one or two considerations which seem to me very much to take off the edge of it; in particular, this:—that, while the miracles of the gospels account extremely well for Jesus’ having been received as the Christ by a part of the Jewish nation, they make it utterly unaccountable and incredible how, by the nation as a whole, he should have been rejected, scorned and crucified. If we believe that Jesus did, publicly, in and about Jerusalem, such miracles as those of John’s gospel, for example—we have certainly a very sufficient account of the belief of his disciples: but then the unbelief of

the people at large who saw those miracles, remains unaccounted for; it was downright madness, a miraculous madness. So that, for one difficulty that we remove in this way, we make a much greater one, and put ourselves further off than ever from a reconciliation of the phenomena of Christian history with the laws of the human mind. In fact, if we take the miracles of the four gospels into our account of Christianity, *we have got too much*—more than we want, and more than we can very well tell what to do with. The fuller notice, however, of this argument I was obliged to defer until we should have completed our review of the evangelic miracles, by a particular examination of that one which is chief in importance of them all—the Resurrection of Christ. Having done this in the last Lecture, we are now in a condition to recur to the question, and see more exactly how and where we stand in regard to the problem of the Origin of Christianity.

And, first of all, I must take leave to put in my protest against the assumption which this supernaturalist argument goes upon; the assumption that we are bound, either to accept a miraculous solution of a problem of this sort, coming to us from an age and a people lying out of the range of regular history, or else to find a solution for ourselves. I decline being held to any such dilemma. It may possibly be, in such a case, both that the alleged solution is itself a problem as hard as that which it solves, and also that we have not historical data for forming another; in which case the obvious alternative is a simple confession of ignorance. It may be that, while I am disabled from accepting the traditions of the first century or half-century of the Christian church, by their contradictoriness, their looseness, their confusedness, and, most of all, by that quality of the marvellous which reason unhesitatingly rejects in all other traditions,—while, standing on the broad ground of the experienced stability of nature and her laws, and the equally experienced tendency of mind, at a particular stage of its growth, to make miracles and believe them, I reject these Christian miracles as I reject all other miracles,—it may be that, at the same time, I cannot tell you,

with confidence and precision, how Christianity came to be. How should I? Am I to excogitate a history? I may be able to judge, of a history two thousand, or five thousand years old, whether it reads like a real history of real events: but it is too much to ask me to make the history of two thousand years ago. I have a clear logical right to say, 'I know nothing whatever about the matter, have not the means of knowledge; the whole thing is buried in the past, and I cannot exhume it: I cannot, on the one hand, discover the undiscoverable—nor can I, on the other, believe the unbelievable.'

What do we do in other cases, that offer themselves in something like parallelism to this of the Origin of Christianity? Take, for instance, the Conversion of Anglo-Saxon Britain to Christianity by Austin and his forty monks. Here was a vast moral result; a revolution in national opinion, character, legislation, of a sufficiently definite and wonderful sort. How was it achieved? I imagine we should find it difficult to say, precisely and in detail. We are told that it was by miracle; but we do not believe it: it is the one only part of the story that we disbelieve. Austin and his monks gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead: the thing was so perfectly well known, that pope Gregory had to write to the Saint, to admonish him against being puffed up by the plenitude of his spiritual gifts. Now this furnishes a very clear and satisfactory account of how it was that our idolatrous and semi-savage ancestors were christianised and civilised: but we do not believe one single word of it. We only know the great ultimate fact, that they were christianised and civilised: if we try to go beyond this fact, to speculate upon it and account for it, our only resource is in a generality—the power of moral ideas, the force of moral inspiration, as it spoke from the hearts of those missionaries apostolic to the hearts of their rude barbarian auditors. We believe tradition, when it says that Austin evangelised the Heptarchy: we disbelieve tradition, when it says that Austin evangelised the Heptarchy by miracle. How he did it, if not by miracle, is a quite collateral consideration, about which we are glad to satisfy our-

selves, if we can. Our first recourse (often our last and only one, in such cases) is to the power of mind over mind, the power of the faith that is in one man to inspire a like faith in another man, the elective affinities of the natural human heart for the highest truth and good that are offered to it.

I doubt whether we can expect to come much nearer than this, to an historical *rationale* of any extensive moral revolution lying far away from us in an unhistorical time. We may seize the ruling idea of it; we may discern ideas growing out of ideas, and actualising themselves in a legislation or a literature; we may trace the psychological, and even the matter-of-fact outlines of the whole: but any accurate filling-in of the parts is out of the question, when once legend has got possession of the ground, and mixed fact with poetry and fable. In this matter now, of the history of the Life and Work of Christ—how can we hope ever to get at the bare, naked facts? We, of this nineteenth century of European civilisation—how can we place ourselves, otherwise than conjecturally and by approximation, in sympathy with the Hebrew mind of the first century?—a mind so unlike our own, except in those elements of thought and feeling which, through Christianity, we have received from it; our opinions, our institutions, our habitual interests and excitements, our whole intellectual and social being, so different from anything then existing; with nothing to guide us to the time and the place we want to know about, but collections of loose, floating traditions, dated we know not when, collected by we know not whom. What can we do in such a case, but fall back on the great general laws of the human mind, as these were modified in their operation by the particular laws of the Hebrew mind—and say that all believing, unscientific times and nations have their miracles, and that a people like the Hebrews, under the strongest excitement that a people ever experienced (that of their Messianic idea seemingly about to be realised in that wonderfully gifted being, Jesus of Nazareth), must have exhibited forms of thought and feeling which we, of this cold western world, can give but a poor account of. They must have had their miracles; miracles at the time, or what looked like miracles—those of the demoniacs and para-

lytics, for instance—and miracles without number afterwards, when the whole was magnified through the mist of distance : we might have known this, though not a gospel had ever been written : and they must have had particular sorts of miracles, for they had all the ample fund of their own prophecies and traditions to draw upon. Impossible ! that a prophet should come among them, believing himself to be their own Christ, with inspiration and force of character to bring his faith home to their faith—and that miracles should not grow and cluster around his name and person, fast and freely.

This is the short, general account, as it appears to me, of Christianity and its miracles:—given the Hebrew Messianic idea ; given the mind, heart, soul of a Jesus of Nazareth, to appropriate and embody that idea, and stir the Hebrew spirit by the might of his own living and life-giving word ; and given some half-century, more or less, for the spirit of legend to do its work—and we have the elements of our four gospels and of all that came out of them. Christianity, as we there have it, is the product, first, of Christ's mind acting on the Hebrew mind, and next, of the Hebrew mind reacting upon Christ's history. Its gentleness, devoutness, spirituality, meek magnanimity and generous brotherliness, its Worship of Sorrow and whatever else we mean by the ' Spirit of Christianity,' come of the moral individuality of Jesus, as represented in his teachings, life and death : its miracles and fulfilments of prophecy come of that Hebraism, which was the element in which and on which he had to work.

And this short, general account of the birth-time of Christianity is, I think, all that can reasonably be expected of the anti-supernaturalist, so far as the four gospels are concerned. These books are of too questionable a character, externally and internally, to allow or require more. One of the Christian miracles, however—the Resurrection of Jesus—does seem to ask something more than this. It is differently circumstanced from the others in regard to evidence ; being vouched not merely by the anonymous, undated and contradictory traditions collected in the gospels, but by the general faith of the church from the very beginning. The probable

history of this faith I attempted to develop in the last Lecture (following the course of Dr. Strauss's reasonings on the subject), by referring it to a natural source in the moral ideas and wants of the age that gave it birth. It was the reconciliation of the sad, bewildering contradiction that arose in Christian hearts when Jesus died. The Death of Jesus, and the Messiahship of Jesus—these two formed an enormous, distracting incongruity: the Resurrection of Jesus was the solution and adjustment of that incongruity. There was the humbling, astounding fact, which memory could not forget—there was the cherished faith, which the heart would not relinquish: they knew that Jesus died on the cross—they knew that Jesus was the Christ: the only possible reconciliation of these two was in the faith that Jesus was risen, and would come again; a faith which would soon clothe itself in dream and vision, and, somewhat later, in poetry and legend, in the myths of the earthquake, the angels, the forty days, and the ascension. Such is Dr. Strauss's view of the birth and growth of the Gospel of the Resurrection; a view liable, of course, to the uncertainty that must attach to every attempt at retranslating legend into history, yet recommended, I think, to our reason, by its exceeding simplicity, its fidelity to the laws of human nature and of Hebrew nature—assigning no other causes for the effect than such as certainly were in existence—and, we may add (though the consideration does not, in strictness, belong to a matter-of-fact inquiry) recommended to our feelings by its moral congruity; tracing, as it does, a great idea to its source in ideas, asking no help from trickery or chance, and so leaving the mind in clear, full possession of two great moral entireties—the Love of the Master and the Faith of the Disciples, each stronger than death and victorious over death.

The question is sometimes asked—and that with a rather triumphant air and tone, as though it decided, once for all, the whole controversy about miracles—How, without miracles, could a crucified Jew have founded Christianity—made the Christian religion and church? There is supposed to be a monstrous incongruity in this; an incongruity which necessi-

tates miracle for its solution. Now this is really a singular way of stating the difficulty. 'How could a crucified Jew have founded the Christian religion?' Why, *who but* a crucified Jew could have founded the Christian religion? These two elements, the Crucifixion and the Judaism (as Strauss excellently reasons in one of the controversial pamphlets called forth by the criticisms on his "Life of Jesus"), were essential ingredients in that moral revolution of which Jesus of Nazareth was the Head and Author; not hinderances to success, but actually conditions of success. Each was indispensable to the result. There never could have been a Christian religion in the world without them. The Judaism supplied the intense, impulsive force of the Messianic idea to act upon the Hebrew faith, together with the sublime simplicity of a monotheistic creed to sway the Gentile reason: the Crucifixion spiritualised and enlarged that idea, took all the exclusiveness out of it without impairing its energy, changed the visible King of Israel into the invisible Lord and Judge of the world. The Crucifixion and the Judaism were conditions without which such a religion as Christianity never could have been.

They were not, most certainly, the only conditions needed for the development and successful progress of a religion for humanity. Not any and every crucified Jew could have founded a church universal. Something more was wanted. And that 'something more' was the mind of such a Jew as Christ—that wonderfully rich, fine, full, profound spirit, uttering itself in those teachings in which even yet the world seeks, not in vain, much of its highest and deepest moral wisdom. And still something more was wanted—the faith that should combine into unity the history and the character of the crucified Christ, giving to the Jew his Messiah, and to the Gentile his Lord of an immortal life. The faith in the risen Christ was wanted to harmonise and crown the rest; and then the conditions were completed, and humanity had its Christian religion. *These four* were the essential elements of the apostolic Christianity:—the Hebrew Messiahship; the Crucifixion; the Resurrection, to harmonise these; and the Moral Personality of Jesus, to pervade and enrich the whole.

These together made Christianity; made it what it was and what it is—a faith for humanity, the realised ideal of the world's great longing, the satisfied desire of all nations. So that, in the founding of the world's best and highest gospel by a crucified Jew, we have not a miracle to marvel at, and technically 'account for' by heaping other miracles upon it—but an exquisitely wise and beautiful arrangement of Providence, to admire and adore; an arrangement by which, in the fulness of time, all the elements needed to form an enduring, universal faith were combined in one harmonious entirety, and sent out on their work of healing love, by Him who maketh the winds his messengers and the lightnings his servants.

And this seems, historically, to have been the whole of that primitive apostolic Christianity, of which our only authentic knowledge is derivable, not from the evangelic legends (which are not primitive but secondary formations), but from the earlier and trustworthier source of the Epistles of Paul. It is remarkable that *Paul does not indicate any acquaintance whatever with the gospel miracles*. Whether it was that the traditions of those miracles were not fully developed in his time; or that he lived and worked in only slight and casual connexion with the Hebrew part of the church, and so was not in the way of hearing much about them; or that he did not value them as a ground of faith; or that he did not believe them;—certain it is that he does not speak of them. Paul's Christ was not a wonder-worker, not a miraculous healer of diseases and feeder of famished multitudes—but the crucified and risen Christ, the Christ once slain and now ascended into the heaven of heavens, there to reign invisibly till all things shall be put under his feet. The elements of Paul's Christianity were simply those which I have already spoken of:—the Hebrew Messiahship, enlarged and spiritualised, by the death of the cross, into a world-Messiahship; this crowned and completed by the Resurrection to an immortal life (a thing Paul would have no difficulty about, when once he had mastered the offence of the cross—he had learned at the feet of Gamaliel to believe it not impossible that God should raise the dead); these authenticated by visions and voices from the

third heaven, and texts from Hebrew prophecy; the whole pervaded by the moral inspiration which he had caught from those (martyrs and others) whom Christ had inspired with the breath of his own lips and life. This was Paul's Christianity. This was the world of ideas in which Paul lived, moved, and had his being. It was his faith, his religion, his gospel; the gospel with which he moved the world, as it had moved him. It was to this that he attached the whole of that peculiar theology which forms the staple material of so much of his writings,—the justification by faith, and the atoning, sacrificial death. Paul does not seem to have known of anything else in Christianity. He is always preaching about Christ, and writing about Christ; he is full of Christ; Christ is all in all to him:—yet he never speaks of Christ's miracles. Whether he had not heard of them, or did not care about them, or did not believe them—however we account for it, at any rate they formed no visible part of his Christianity; he did perfectly well without them. It really seems as if the gospel miracles were less known then than they are now; as if they were an after-growth of the Christian faith, springing up not quite at the beginning of Christianity, but some time after the beginning. At all events the fact is well worth noting, that the earliest literature we have from the Christian era, of indisputable antiquity and genuineness, makes no mention of the miracles of Christ. Paul's Christianity is, essentially, a thing not of facts but of ideas. He does not write like a man who had examined the question of miracles—but like a man who had studied the prophecies, and made a scheme of theology, and had visions from the Lord, and been in the third heaven. Altogether, it may fairly be doubted whether the miracles of our four gospels were in existence in that earliest age of Christianity of which Paul's Epistles are the only relic we now possess.

Dr. Strauss closes his work with a very interesting Chapter entitled, "The Doctrinal Significance of the Life of Jesus;" in which he sets himself to re-adjust the relations of Christianity to religion and philosophy, upon the principles re-

quired by the results of his great critical inquiry ; to expound the religious and philosophical value of those Christian ideas whose outward expression, in the early Christian books, he deems untenable. Having discussed, with scientific rigour, the problem of the historical Origin of Christianity, he concludes with doing justice to those moral truths of which Christianity, whatever its origin, is, in point of fact and result, an expression. The inquiry is not one through which I shall now attempt to follow him, as he pursues it with close reference to certain schools of German theology and metaphysics, with which most of us are probably little familiar ; and I accordingly here take my leave of our Author and his Book, with my best thanks to him and it, for the solution of many an embarrassing difficulty, and for the elements of what I think a better understanding of one of the gravest questions in the whole history of the human mind.

It may be well for us, however, at the close of this examination into the Origin of Christianity and the historical character of its miracles, to institute for ourselves that great inquiry, that question of questions, What is the moral significance, the value of Christianity, and how is this affected by the relinquishment of the supernatural element of it ? What is Christianity to us, without the miracles ? What are we to do with Christianity, after discarding its miracles, and, with its miracles, that sort of authority which miracles are supposed to give ? Of course it must make some difference in our relations to the Christian religion, in our whole way of thinking about it and dealing with it — whether we regard it as placed in our world by a special, direct volition of Deity, or as a natural growth out of the soil of the human heart. It makes a difference : the question is, What, in kind or degree, is that difference ? In other words, what are we now to do with Christianity ?

What are we to do with Christianity ? — that wonderful faith which has come so mysteriously into our world, and lived in it eighteen hundred years already, with such a wealth and fulness of life and living power ; doing so much, and undoing

so much; uprooting an old civilisation, and planting a new one upon its ruins; doing so much, and in so many ways, both of good and evil; Christianity, the inspiration of the philanthropist, and the stalking-horse of the tyrant; the word of God in the heart of the reformer-prophet, and the lie on the lips of the bigot-priest; the endurer and the infliker of martyrdom for conscience-sake; Christianity, with all its ideas, moralities and spiritual forces, working, in countless ways and through countless channels, upon literature, art, philosophy, legislation, and all the other interests of our social and moral being: what are we to do with this great, enduring, all-pervading spirit or power of Christianity—those of us who believe it to be simply a growth of nature and the human heart, with no other divinity or divine authority than its own truth as recognised by our own minds, and no other divine right or sanction than what we infer from what we see of its nature and its history? What are we to do with Christianity?

Perhaps some will say, 'We have nothing to do with it; we have already done away with it, by discarding its evidences in miracle: the miracles being false, it is without evidence, it is a false thing altogether, a dead thing, and we have nothing to do but bury it out of our sight, without more words.'—Hardly so, I think. Miracles do not make a religion; nor does the withdrawal of miracles unmake a religion. Miracles are not religion; but only a particular sort of machinery by which a particular form of religion may, or may not, at a given time and place, get room for itself in the world. The essence of a religion is never in its miracles, true or false; but in its ideas, its moralities, the phases of character, the modes of intellectual and moral being which it calls into existence. The Jewish religion is not in the plagues of Egypt and the thunders of Sinai; but in the legislation, the ritual and the morality of the Pentateuch. The Christian religion is not in the changing of water into wine and feeding five thousand men at a cheap rate; not in violations of the law of gravitation, or of any other law; but in the ideas that were the spirit and power of Christ's mind, in the spiritual impulses and influences that come from Christ's mind to our minds, in the moral inspira-

tion that breathes out from Christ's heart into our hearts. The essence of a religion is in its ideas. Where else should it be? A religion is true or false, according as these are true or false, in accordance or in discordance with the ideal of human truth and good. It is not a question of miracles, one way or the other. The presence of miracle could never make a false religion true; nor can the absence of miracle ever make a true religion false. The Christian religion may be a quite true religion; the religion of brotherhood and immortality, the religion of the Sermon on the Mount, the religion of the Good Samaritan, the religion of the Well of Jacob and the Lake of Galilee, the religion of the workshop of Nazareth—may be a true religion, the truest of religions, though the whole of the miracles together come from the limbo of the vanities. The question still remains then—miracles or no miracles—What are we to do with Christianity?

What are we to do with Christianity?—What do we do with other religions, other poetries and moralities, other philosophies of life, man and God? We simply accept them for what they are worth, as expositions, more or less authentic and complete, of a portion of spiritual reality; as parts, sustaining more or less important relations to the whole, of humanity's realised and garnered mental wealth; as indicating, by the very fact that here they are, something in human capability, tendency, and destination; as chapters in the volume of God's book; as expressions of moral ideas, utterances of moral wants. We thus accept them all: and we test the worth and amount of the truth that is in each, by the joint standard of individual feeling and of the world's general experience; valuing each by the kind and degree of its influences, by its proved capability or incapability of enduring, by the forms of moral life which it expresses or creates. We accept each as true, according to the extent to which it has proved itself true by its works. We accept each and all for what they are severally worth, as emanations, more or less direct and pure, from that Spirit of God in man which is the great eternal soul of our human world—the well-spring of all our prophesyings, gospels, moralities, religions. And why not

Christianity?—Christianity, the divinest of them all; which has worked longer than most of them, worked the most variously, benignly, and powerfully of them all; which has done the most for human progress of them all; and which, in its connexions with the moral civilisation of those nations which stand at the head of the human race and furnish the best specimens of humanity in its best estate, may be taken as, on the whole, the most significant phenomenon in the history of our world, our truest and most intelligible expositor of what God is doing with our world.

What shall we do, then, with Christianity? Why, accept it as the expression of truths, in human nature and human life, to which many ages and many nations have testified that they are truths: accept it, if not any longer as a creed having dogmatical truth, or as a history having historical truth, yet as a poem fraught with truth of a higher order than the dogmatic or historical—a poem, a divine parable: accept its ideal of human character and capability, in that wonderful Man of Nazareth in whom so glorious a strength blends with so gentle a repose—Son of God and Son of Man, majestic as a prophet and meek as a little child: accept its ideal of human destiny, in the history of that Man of Nazareth, born of God (as we are all born of God, with two natures in us—children we are, like him, of an invisible Father and a visible Mother, God and Nature), tempted in a wilderness—as we all are tempted, and of the very same devil, or devils—struggling, suffering, triumphing, conquered by death, yet conquering over death:—accept this Christianity: accept its Cross, the symbol of Trial; its Resurrection, the symbol of Victory; its Millennium or Reign of Saints, the symbol of our New Moral World, with Right and Love for its only law; its Heaven, the symbol of the Blessedness which itself creates; its Father-God, the symbol of the great, mysterious, all-upholding, all-inspiring Power, in which and by which we live, move, and have our being. Accept Christianity, and these things in Christianity: that is, if we see them there. If not, so be it: perhaps we may see them more clearly

somewhere else. There is no compulsion in the matter; no believing under penalties; no hell-fire.

What shall we do with Christianity? Nothing artificial, nothing forced, nothing false; nothing that shall hinder the full, free development of mental and moral individuality. Not make a yoke of bondage of it: not make a labour-saving machine of it: not make a preceptive morality of it, to supersede the morality of principle and spirit: not make a creed-theology of it, to supersede thought and philosophy: not make a hierarchical church of it, to supersede God's order of prophets and seers: not make a poor, formal lip-worship of it, to trammel the freedom of the worship which is in truth only when it is in spirit:—do nothing with it that shall narrow the sympathies, enslave the will, enfeeble and sectarianise the intellect, impoverish the humanities, pervert or hinder our growth up to the fulness of the measure of the stature of perfect men.

What shall we do with Christianity? Why, take its best principles, and do battle, in the strength of them, against its worst perversions. Take its Law of Love, its revelation of Brotherhood and brotherly Equality, its ideal of divine purpose and human destiny, its spirituality, its simplicity—and combat, strong in these, with all the frauds, falsehoods, conventionalisms, mummeries, quakeries, monopolies, tyrannies, sectarianisms, pharisaisms, that are practised in its name and sanctified with its sanctions—the disgrace of churches, and the bane of states—that even make it a question, with not unthinking men, whether, on the whole, Christianity has done more of good or of mischief in the world—that make it no question at all but that, if Christ were to come again, he would be crucified again by the Chief Priests.

What shall we do with Christianity? Why, if we can, improve upon it; improve upon Paul's Christianity, as Paul improved upon Peter's Christianity: develope it further, more wisely and variously than it has ever been developed yet. Work out its great enduring principles the full length to which they will go as principles, in their varied applications

to every department of human thought and life: enshrine its eternal spirit in new forms of beneficence and beauty, as the spirit of humanity itself rises to new heights, and tries its strength in new modes of being and action: work out, by the light and with the resources of our own day and generation, its grand idea of a Kingdom of Heaven and of God: carry its justice, its freedom and its faith into our literature, our trade, our politics, and wherever else justice, freedom and faith can find or make a place for themselves:—do all we can with this and with every other genuine utterance of the Spirit of Humanity, that shall make us wiser, stronger, truer men—bring us into nearer intelligence of the laws, and profounder sympathy with the spirit, of the great world of God.

THE END.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY LEVEY, ROBSON, AND FRANKLYN,
Great New Street, Fetter Lane.

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